

2020

Risk Factors for Sexual Assault Victimization on a College Campus

Josh Studeny
Walden University

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Walden University

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Josh Studeny

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Risk Factors for Sexual Assault Victimization on a College Campus

by

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MA, Slippery Rock University, 2016

BS, Slippery Rock University, 2013

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

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Abstract

In the United States, sexual assaults are becoming increasingly prevalent on college campuses. This study addressed the problem of increasing sexual assaults at a Northeastern university in the United States. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the risk factors that led to sexual assault victimization on a college campus through the students', campus police officers', and counselors' perspectives. This study incorporated Cohen and Felson's theoretical framework of the routine activity theory. The focus of the study was on perceptions of (a) risk factors that motivate offenders to commit sexual assault in a university setting, (b) risk factors that contribute to capable guardianship for incidents involving sexual assaults in a university setting, and (c) risk factors that contribute to a victim being a suitable target for sexual assault in a university setting. The overall research design was a descriptive phenomenological qualitative study. This approach led to an understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and opinions of the 11 students, 3 campus police officers, and 2 counselors. Snowball and convenience sampling was used to recruit participants. The data collection methods consisted of email interviews through which participants were asked open-ended questions. The collected data were then interpreted using thematic analysis. Through the experiences of the participants, this study illustrated that there are multiple risk factors associated to campus sexual assault, including drugs and alcohol being the top risk factor. The results of the study will be shared with university administrators, policy makers, and law enforcement agencies to implement positive social change by increasing awareness, encouraging the community to support targets/victims, and helping universities change their policies regarding sexual assaults.

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Dedication

With the love and support from my parents, I dedicate this study to them. Their positivity encouraged me to keep going and never to give up on my dream. Thank you for being there when I needed it most on my dissertation journey.

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I want to thank my friends and family for their patience, encouragement and sacrifices throughout this journey. I appreciate the understanding for whenever I had to work on this dissertation instead of being involved in the events going on.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

When students think about college, they see an opportunity to receive a higher education to start their career paths. However, little do they know they are entering the hunting ground capital for sexual assaults. Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (2018) reported that one in five female college students experienced a sexual assault, while their male counterparts were less likely at one in sixteen during their time on a college campus. Sexual assaults are occurring more frequently on college campuses than people realize. The research of Cantor et al. (2015) and Krebs et al. (2016) indicated that over 25% of female senior college students reported a sexual assault during their time on a college campus. Understanding these statistics is important, but they do not show the real figures. The concern with studying sexual assaults is that roughly 90% go unreported (P.C.A.R., 2018). Conley, Overstreet, Hawn, Kendler, Dick, and Amstadter (2017) stated that only 11.5% of college students reported their sexual assault encounters to the authorities or a university employee. Also, past research showed that as low as 2.7% of victims reported their encounter when they used alcohol or drugs at the time of the sexual assault (Conley et al.2017). To remedy this issue, it is vital that researchers look into the risk factors that cause sexual assaults on college campuses. Sutton and Simmons (2015) stated that, to establish effective prevention tactics, college campuses must understand the risk factors driving the perpetration and victimization.

The definition of sexual assault varies from one university to the next. The definitions are broad and include everything from physical to nonphysical, and verbal to nonverbal behaviors. Examples that can be classified as sexual assault are unwanted

touching, sex, kissing, sexually talking, sexual motions purposely towards an individual, and other unwelcomed behavior. The U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women (2017) stated that “explicit” consent must be warranted before there is sexual contact or behavior towards the recipient.

This study came at a pivotal time as universities across the United States are struggling with sexual assault victimization. McDaniel and Rodriguez (2017) stated that female college students ages 18-24 were 3 times more likely to be a victim of sexual assault than nonstudents. Also, the U.S. Department of Justice (2014) confirmed that male colleges students were 78% more likely to be a victim of sexual assault than male nonstudents. President Obama stated,

Sexual violence is more than just a crime against individuals. It threatens our families, it threatens our communities; ultimately, it threatens the entire country. It tears apart the fabric of our communities. And that is why we are here today—because we have the power to do something about it as a government, as a nation. We have the capacity to stop sexual assault, support those who have survived it, and bring perpetrators to justice. (White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014)

In this chapter, the background, problem statement, purpose statement, theoretical framework, research questions, nature of the study, significance, and limitations are all discussed with a focus on contributing risk factors on why sexual assaults occur on college campuses. I also elaborate on the need to research the problem of sexual assault victimization on college campuses. This study provided adequate data for public policy

decision-makers to formulate and change policies on safety issues and concerns about sexual assaults on university campuses.

Background

Sexual assaults on college campuses have a long history, but it was not until the 1970s that the government collaborated with universities to attempt to put an end to sexual assault victimization. During this period, referred to as the rape reform movement (Bachman, 1993), federal and state laws were designed to help victims of any sexual violence. The laws redefined sexual violence and changed the ways it was handled in trials and throughout the criminal justice system (Bachman, 1993). In 1972, the government passed Title IX to protect students from being discriminated against based on their sex. More so, Title IX protects students against sexual violence when they are on school property by allowing them to report their victimization (Koss, Wilgus, & Williamsen, 2014). Title IX was a big leap forward because sexual violence was and still is the most underreported crime in the United States (DePrince, Wright, Gagnon, Srinivas, & Labus, 2019).

In the 1990s, the U.S. government took another step forward against sexual violence by passing the Jeanne Clery Act. This law stemmed from when a student at Lehigh University was raped and murdered in 1986 (Holder, 2018). The Jeanne Clery Act ensures that all institutions receive financial aid or Pell Grants to make their crime statistics available for the public to see (Miles, 2018). In addition to the university's daily crime logs, university officials are also obligated to notify students about safety threats on campus (Holder, 2018).

Later in the 1990s, the Violence Against Women Act was passed in 1994. This act provided a cost-effective and comprehensive response efforts to sexual assault victims (Clark, Biddle, & Martin, 2002). This act was revised in 2000, 2005, 2013, and 2019 to include more groups of people and to improve standards for health and life-saving services (National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2019). For example, the latest revision in March of 2019 included enhancing health services for college students, LGBTQ, immigrants, and public housing residents (National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2019).

In 2013, a positive change for universities took place because of the Campus SaVE Act. The SaVE Act was essential because it required universities to be more transparent about statistics for crimes that occur on campus, provide campus-wide education programs regarding sexual violence prevention, develop disciplinary procedures for the offenders, and provide individual accommodations and guarantee victim's rights (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network [RAINN], 2019). Before the introduction of this act, universities were only required to report forcible and nonforcible crimes, not including the majority of sexual assault crimes, stalking, and dating and domestic violence (RAINN, 2019). This act also makes universities ensure that proper accommodations are offered to sexual assault victims, such as improving the victims working conditions, housing, academics, and transportation needs (RAINN, 2019). Also, the universities must provide an option for the victim to have a restraining order while attending the university and any contact information for outside assistance the victim needs (RAINN, 2019).

In 2014, President Barack Obama stated, “Perhaps most important, we need to keep saying to anyone out there who has ever been assaulted: you are not alone. We have your back. I’ve got your back” (The Whitehouse President Barack Obama, 2014). This statement fueled the White House Task Force, which released a report called NotAlone, which guaranteed that higher education institutions that did not have sexual assault policies adopted them and that those who did, updated their policies. The NotAlone report incorporated policies such as prevention, reporting, investigation, and training for faculty (White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014).

Traditionally, male victims have been neglected from discussions of sexual violence because the common myth was that males were only subjected to sexual violence in prison (Hogge, 2017). According to McDaniel and Rodriguez (2017), males were historically viewed as the perpetrator instead of the victim of sexual assault. This is primarily because of the acceptance of rape myths and the gender roles in society. Therefore, there is little research on male victimization regarding sexual assaults. Even the Violence Against Women Act has not been very successful in the cases where males were the victims of sexual violence (Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994).

Literature is abundant on risk factors associated with sexual assault, but it must be further examined by gathering the perceptions of students, campus police officers, and counselors on college campuses in the Northeastern part of the United States. Quade (2019) and Orchowski, Berkowitz, Boggis, and Oesterle (2016) agreed that binge drinking is a correlation to aggressive behavior, which results in more sexual assaults on

college campuses. Furthermore, Abbey, Wegner, Woerner, Pegram, and Pierce (2014) and DiJulio, Norton, Craighill, Clement, and Brodie (2015) concluded that 50%-75% of reported sexual assault cases among college students involved alcohol.

As the background pointed out, government and university officials have been relentlessly attempting to figure out how to minimize sexual assaults on college campuses for the past century. This study is needed to help close a gap in the literature on contributing risk factors that lead to sexual assaults on college campuses.

Problem Statement

There is a problem on university campuses in the United States regarding sexual assault victimization (Fedina, Holmes, & Backes, 2018). More specifically, sexual assaults on a Northeastern university campus in the United States are currently a problem for students. Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (2018) reported that one in five female college students are sexually assaulted, while their male counterparts are sexually assaulted one in sixteen, but together 90% of them go unreported. This problem impacts students by decreasing education attainment, heightening their level of fear, increasing depression, and increasing alcohol and drug addictions (Combs, Jordan, & Smith, 2014; Fedina et al., 2018). Currently, the university is enhancing safety measures, such as creating a safety application, introducing safety escort services, and inserting call boxes. However, this has not reduced sexual assault victimization on campus as university records indicate that the rate of sexual assault has increased more than 5% in the last 3 years. There are several possible risk factors contributing to this problem, among which are drug and alcohol use, Greek life, class rank, appearance, athletics, and lack of sexual

assault education (Mellins et al., 2017; Testa & Cleveland, 2016). Literature reviewed for this study found other researchers have focused on victimization, fear of crime, and perceived risk (Rennison & Addington, 2018; Schafer, Lee, Burruss, & Giblin, 2018; Schildkraut, Elsass, & Stafford, 2015). This research added to existing literature with its investigation of perceptions on contributing risk factors that are related to sexual assault incidents that college students, campus police, and counselors perceive. This study filled in this gap by contributing to the body of knowledge needed to address this problem by providing data to public policy decision makers to formulate and/or change policies on safety issues and concerns about sexual assaults on university campuses.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological qualitative study was to understand the perceptions that college students, campus police officers, and counselors have of contributing risk factors that are associated to sexual assault victimization on a Northeastern college campus in the United States. Interestingly, Boyle (2015) argued that students who attended college were more susceptible to being sexually victimized than a person who is considered a non-student. To address the gap, this study encompassed a mixed sampling strategy for college students who attended the university, campus police officers, and counselors. Data were obtained through email interviews with open-ended questions.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of risk factors that motivate offenders to commit sexual assault in a university setting?
2. What are the perceptions of risk factors that contribute to capable guardianship for incidents involving sexual assaults in a university setting?
3. What are the perceptions of risk factors that contribute to a victim being a suitable target for sexual assault in a university setting?

Theoretical Foundation for the Study

The theoretical framework for this study was Cohen and Felson's (1979) routine activity theory, which is based on three principles for crime to occur: (a) a motivated offender, (b) a suitable target, and (c) absence of a capable guardian. That is, a motivated offender and suitable target come together in time and space while there is an absence of capable guardianship (Cohen & Felson 1979). Therefore, properties that have a lack of capable guardianship present are likely to see victimization. An example is on college campuses as university administrators and campus police cannot oversee the entire campus at once. Henson and Stone (1999) stated that a college campus will always be one of the most prominent places where one will see motivated offenders, suitable targets, and absence of capable guardians. To explain further, Henson and Stone (1999) stated, "Young people and their portable possessions will, in general, always be incapable guardians and suitable targets, respectively, and a reserve army of motivated offenders will always be found among the ranks of college students."

The routine activity theory was linked to sexual assault victimization for the first time by Schwartz and Pitts (1995). From there on, several more studies incorporated this theory to help explain why sexual victimization occurs (Clodfelter, Turner, Hartman, & Kuhns, 2010; Fisher, Daigle, & Cullen, 2010; Ford & Soto-Marquez 2016). For nearly 40 years, the routine activity theory has been widely used to explain why crime occurs.

The routine activity theory was integrated into the research questions by using the three core principles. For example, the first question asked about motivated offenders, the second question focused on capable guardianship, and the third question centered on suitable targets. The routine activity theory helped to understand why sexual assaults occur on a college campus through the lens of the college students, campus police officers, and counselors.

Nature of the Study

To answer the research questions, this study used a descriptive phenomenological qualitative research design. The rationale for using this design was to describe the phenomena by addressing the “what.” For example, the research questions stated, “What are the perceptions...” This particular design allows researchers to explore lived experiences of the participants by gathering their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, emotion, and other characteristics (Lewis, 2015).

Population

The population included students, campus police, and counselors. These populations were situated on a large public Northeastern university in the United States. According to the university’s student affairs office, the population of college students

was approximately 28,000, the population of campus police officers was roughly 100, and the campus included several counseling offices.

Sampling

This study used both a convenience and snowball sampling method. The convenience sampling technique allows researchers to identify populations that are close and easy to reach (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). For this study, I used the convenience sampling technique for both the campus police and counselor populations. I utilized personal networking to gain contact information for the participants.

The snowball sampling technique allowed me to reach participants by word of mouth to collect data for college students. I reached out to friends, and they forwarded the invitation out to their friends that fit the study's criteria and those friends sent out the invitation and so on. The goal for the study was to recruit at least 10 college students, three campus police officers, and one counselor. I continued to recruit participants until the data were repeated.

Analysis Technique

This study used thematic coding to analyze the data by using Microsoft Excel and coding by hand. Thematic coding allows researchers to expand the range of the participant's perceptions (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Due to the use of email for interviews, the data did not need to be transcribed. After examining the data, I coded the text using alike words and phrases. I then searched for categories that emerged. These categories helped determine emerging themes that answered the research questions.

Definitions

Binge drinking: Drinking four or more alcoholic drinks in a short period of time (Lannoy, Billieux, Poncin, & Maurage, 2017).

Consent: A mutual agreement between partners to engage in sex (Martin, 2015).

Counselor: Someone who is trained to give advice, guidance, or support on personal or psychological problems (Martin, 2015).

Campus sexual assault (CSA): Any type of unwanted sexual touching or sex on a college campus.

Perpetrator: Someone who intentionally commits a crime or harmful act (Mellins et al., 2017).

Provocative: Describing an explicit or “sexy” outfit (Johnson et al., 2016).

Sexual assault: Defined by the university under study as “Any sexual act directed against another person, without consent of the victim, including instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent.”

Sexual violence: A physical sexual interaction that is against someone’s will (DeMatteo, Galloway, Arnold, & Patel, 2015).

Victims: Someone who has been taken advantage of, forced to doing something against their own will, or injured (DeMatteo et al., 2015).

Assumptions

This study on sexual assaults covered an important topic that is not easily discussed in a straightforward manner, especially with college students. This study assumed that all the participants were honest with their responses. Honest answers were

essential to this study so that each research question could be answered as accurately as possible.

Delimitations

This study set out to understand the contributing risk factors that lead to sexual assaults on a college campus. There are three main aspects this study focused on: motivated offenders, capable guardianship, and suitable targets. These three aspects were chosen in conjunction with the theoretical framework, the routine activity theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) to help understand why sexual assaults occur on college campuses.

The populations included in this study are students, campus counselors, and campus police officers. The selection criteria for students included attending the large Northeastern public university and being over the age of 18. The requirements for the campus counselors and campus police were that they are located on or around the university.

The exclusions from this study included any college student who does not attend the university or is under the age of 18, and any outside police agencies and counselors not located on or around the university. Delimitations also refrained any perceptions that students may have interpretations about that are outside of their college experience. Next, this study used email interviews for data collection. These interviews prohibited gathering nonverbal gestures and social cues. Lastly, common frameworks that were used throughout the literature to explain sexual assaults, but not mentioned in this study were the empowerment theory, social learning theory, and social control theory.

Transferability was addressed by applying thick descriptions throughout the study. By understanding the scope and delimitations of this study, researchers, policymakers, and university officials can apply the results to similar populations.

Limitations

The first limitation of this study was reliability. The smaller the sample size, the less reliability the study has (Boddy, 2016). Qualitative studies have smaller sample sizes because of the goals of the study and the methodology. For example, this study used email interviews in which each participant had 2 weeks to return a response. This can be time consuming, so the small sample size was justified. I continued to collect enough data until the data repeated itself and the research questions were answered thoroughly.

The second issue of this study was an ethical concern with confidentiality. Privacy is a large concern when researchers use human subjects. Since this study incorporated in-depth interviews, sensitive information may be shared. To minimize this ethical issue, I did not ask any personal information and all sites were masked (Walden University, Center for Research Quality, n.d.). To protect the student's identity and personal information, I only used participants' personal emails. This would not permit outside institutions or others to gain access to any information. Lastly, Ravitch and Carl (2016) explained that researchers could give participants confidentiality by generalizing their responses by not using word-for-word responses in the study, which was taken into consideration for this study.

The third limitation is researcher bias. To overcome this limitation, I kept an open mind throughout the entire study and was aware of the potential bias. To minimize bias, I

asked the same interview questions to each participant and ensured they would not be phrased in a way to lead them into answering a particular way.

Significance

This study on sexual assault victimization added to the existing literature by filling the gap on the perspectives regarding the contributing risk factors that result in sexual assault victimization on a Northeastern college campus in United States. The results of the study were shared with university administrators, policy makers, and law enforcement agencies to implement positive social change by increasing awareness, encouraging the community to support targets/victims, and helping universities to change their policies regarding sexual assaults.

Summary

In this study, the social problem of sexual assaults on college campuses was emphasized. This study helped to understand the contributing risk factors that lead to sexual assaults on college campuses through the perceptions of college students, campus counselors, and campus police. Currently, little research has focused on the combination of the students', campus police officers', and counselors' perspectives regarding contributing risk factors on sexual assault victimization on a Northeastern college campus in the United States. Addressing this gap in the literature will allow public policy decision-makers to formulate and change policies on safety issues and concerns about sexual assaults on college campuses.

Chapter 2 will provide a complete overview of the literature on sexual assault victimization on college campuses. First, I explain how literature was located through

different literature search strategies. Secondly, I provide a rationale for the framework.

Lastly, several important key concepts and variables related to the topic of the study are discussed, including sexual assault victims and perpetrators, risk factors, barriers to reporting, and university support.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Currently little research has focused on the combination of the students', campus police officers', and counselors' perspectives regarding contributing risk factors for sexual assault victimization on a Northeastern college campus in the United States. Utilizing both students and professionals, this study received in-depth information from various populations and experiences, which set it apart from previous research. This study filled the gap by contributing to the body of knowledge needed to address the problem of sexual assaults on universities by providing data to public policy decision makers to formulate and/or change policies on safety issues and concerns about sexual assaults on college campuses. The principals of the routine activity theory guided this chapter, as the nuances of sexual assault, victims, offenders, reporting, and barriers are discussed.

Literature Search Strategy

For this literature review, the following databases were used: Criminal Justice Database, ProQuest, Google Scholar, SAGE Journals, Thoreau, and Academic Search Complete. The most frequent keywords for searching the literature included: *sexual assault, sexually assaulted, routine activity theory, campus sexual assault, sexual victimization, college student victimization, victims on a college campus, campus police officers, campus safety, reporting, and consent.*

There was an abundance of literature on campus sexual assaults (CSAs). To find the most relevant literature for this review, I narrowed the search and had to be particular on what literature to use. First, the literature was narrowed by only reviewing the current

literature. The parameters were set to articles published from 2014 to present. Secondly, peer-reviewed articles with the full text through the various databases were selected. After that, the abstracts were read to ensure that the literature was on the topic of choice. If the literature was unavailable via the Walden Library, a request to purchase it was sent through to the Walden Library and access was granted. However, after exhausting the literature, news articles and the Bureau of Justice database were searched. A key to discovering uncovered literature was to use the “chain” strategy. This meant to find links to new literature through the body of the studies and bibliographies. Yet another approach incorporated into this study was reviewing literature that cited well-known authors. After using a variety of approaches to exhaust the literature, I was able to choose the most significant and appropriate sources.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used for this study was the routine activity theory, developed by Cohen and Felson (1979). The routine activity theory stated that for crime to occur there must be a motivated offender, lack of capable guardianship, and a suitable target (Cohen & Felson, 1979). The rationale for choosing this theoretical framework was that it related to how crime occurs, including sexual assaults. In the beginning stages of the routine activity theory, it was intended as a sociological justification of crime opportunities (Schaefer & Mazerolle, 2017). However, the routine activity theory evolved to explain the opportunity differences in victimization. Schaefer and Mazerolle (2017) suggested that the routine activity theory focused on the presence of guardians and victims rather than how the opportunity for crimes emerged.

One of the criticisms that surrounded the routine activity theory was that it unfairly blamed female victims. Vanderwoerd and Cheng (2017) stated that females chose to be involved in activities that led to sexual victimization. For example, if a woman chose to go to a bar or to a sporting event they would place themselves more at risk since they are likely to be surrounded by the most common offender, which are males. However, both Murchison, Boyd, and Pachankis (2017) and Ford and Soto-Marquez (2016) stated that the routine activity theory recognizes both women and men as potential victims and offenders of sexual assaults.

The first principle of the routine activity theory is capable guardianship. This refers to any supervision or protection that deter someone from committing a crime. Typically, college campuses have their own campus police, guards, or local law enforcement to watch over the campus. Other capable guardians on a college campus include administrators and bystanders such as friends or other students. There was little knowledge how capable guardians on a college campus affect sexual assaults. Stotzer and MacCartney (2016) indicated that through the routine activity theory sexual assaults can be prevented by using adequate guardianship. However, the amount of time and space has typically been too vast on a college campus for prevention to be successful.

The second factor in the routine activity theory is a motivated offender. Motivated offenders are anyone seeking the opportunity to commit a crime. The majority of the research conducted on CSAs stated that motivated offenders were most likely acquaintances of the victim and also male. Hines, Armstrong, Reed, Cameron, and Maiuro (2016) stated that nearly 80% of sexual assault cases on campus were committed

by a motivated offender who was affiliated or had previous encounters with the victim. DeMatteo et al. (2015) also stated that 75%-90% of sexual assault cases on college campuses resulted in the victim knowing the perpetrator. Past literature suggested that the perpetrator in a sexual assault case could be either male or female, but in nearly all cases it is a male perpetrator (Cantor et al., 2015; Krebs et al., 2016; McDaniel & Rodriguez, 2017). In addition, Stotzer and MacCartney (2016) mentioned that other motivated offenders are likely to be associated with athletics or Greek life.

The third factor in the routine activity theory is a suitable target. A suitable target could be anything or anyone of value. On a college campus, the most common way for a college student to make themselves a suitable target was by drinking alcohol and using drugs (DiJulio et al., 2015). Using drugs and alcohol could make people pass out or incoherent to the point where they cannot control what is happening around them. Thus, a student could easily be taken advantage of. Another popular way to be a suitable target for sexual assaults is to be involved in Greek life, according to Franklin and Menaker (2018), who mentioned that women who belong to a sorority are five times more likely to be sexually assaulted than those who are not. Lastly, students could make themselves suitable targets by walking alone and wearing provocative clothing (Carroll, Rosenstein, Foubert, Clark, & Korenman, 2016).

Literature Review: Key Concepts and Variables

Sexual Assault

The first variable in understanding sexual assaults is its definition. The definition of sexual assault is complicated because there are several questions to consider when

determining what the correct definition should contain. For example, what is consent? What type of coercion should be considered? What kind of penetration (oral, vaginal, anal) or should all penetration be included? What nonpenetrative acts should be considered (touching, kissing, groping)? Should it include nonphysical actions (verbal pressure into staying in a relationship)? Should it include significant others? What incapacitated acts should it cover (someone on drugs, sleeping, unconscious)? All of these questions should be taken into consideration. Since every university has its own set of procedures and codes of conduct, they only use what they deem to be fair and acceptable. Having a variety of definitions leads to confusion especially if universities do not place a description of sexual assault on their website. According to Lund and Thomas (2015), after a comprehensive examination of 102 university websites, only 61 provided their students with a definition of sexual assault. The definition used in this study was based on the Northeastern university's Title IX sexual assault definition: "any sexual act directed against another person, without consent of the victim, including instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent." This definition also included any unwanted fondling, penetration of any type and no matter how slight it is, and it includes both males and females as potential victims or perpetrators.

Victims

Victims of sexual assault, on a college campus, are those who suffered from someone who intentionally imposed their will on them for sexual gratification. Being a victim of sexual assault could result in short- and long-term effects. Fedina et al. (2018), stated that the consequences of sexual assault victimization led to posttraumatic stress

disorder, eating disorders, anxiety, depression, drug and alcohol addictions, chronic illness, sexually transmitted diseases, injury, and even suicide. Other effects students experienced were lower academic achievement, a decrease in social activities, and loss of friends. Combs et al. (2014) investigated the effects on college students after they were sexually assaulted. Of the 750 students who volunteered, 42% reported they were involved in a CSA (Combs et al., 2014). This equated to 77% developing at least one symptom of depression, and 72% had at least one sign of anxiety (Combs et al., 2014). Also, 49% of the participants stated that they experienced at least one problem due to drinking and 21% reported they experienced a problem with drugs due to sexual victimization (Combs et al., 2014). Both Carey, Norris, Durney, Shepardson, and Carey (2018) and Eisenberg, Lust, Hannan, and Porta (2016) research concluded similar results. Their results confirmed that sexual assault victimization on college students led to symptoms of depression, anxiety, decreased in activity engagement, posttraumatic stress disorder, and other health disorders, with the highest being depression (Carey et al., 2018; Combs et al. 2014).

Victims of sexual assault can be anyone at any time. Both female and male students can be a victim of sexual assault. However, research confirmed that women are targeted more than males (Krebs et al., 2016; Muehlenhard, Peterson, Humphreys, & Jozkowski, 2017; Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape [PCAR], 2018). Muehlenhard et al. (2017) gathered 3,630 articles on sexual assault on college campuses, and 709 had the phrase *one in five* or *1 in 5* in them referring to the chance of female undergraduate students being a victim of CSA. Other literature suggested that closer to 1 in 4 female

college students experienced CSA (Cantor et al., 2015; Krebs et al., 2016). The common misconception was that people tend to believe this ratio was for the entire length of a woman's time on a college campus. It is essential to note that it was a 1 in 5 chance for every year that female students are on a college campus. On the other hand, males are significantly less targeted at 1 in 16 (PCAR, 2018). Lastly, out of all the genders, transgender individuals are the most likely to be victimized (Cantor et al. 2015).

Not only does gender play a role in who is victimized more, but past research stated that specific demographics play a part too. For instance, Coulter et al. (2017) explained that Black transgender students experienced the highest victimization of CSA rate at nearly 57%. Not too far behind them were female bisexual students. Ford and Soto-Marquez (2016) found that female bisexuals had a 2 in 5 chance of being a CSA victim. When discussing heterosexuals, Cantor et al. (2015) study showed that 8.7% of Black students, 7% of White students, and 5.3% of Latino students were sexually assaulted on campus.

Victim blaming. Past research has indicated that college students can be seen as accountable for their own victimization on campus. Spencer, Mallory, Toews, Stith, and Wood (2017) indicated that 11 victims stated they thought the CSA victimization was their own fault. Ojeh (2015) mentioned that victim self-blaming can be the result of being at the wrong place at the wrong time. In fact, Lindo, Siminski, and Swensen (2018) found that the highest rates of CSA occurred from midnight to 4 am. In agreement, Kerner, Kerner, and Herring (2017) stated that the National Institute of Justice indicated the majority of CSA occurred on the weekends and from midnight to 6 am.

The second form of victim blaming that Ojeh (2015) mentioned was the clothing women wore. There are differences in previous literature on whether or not what someone was wearing actually increases CSA. Johnson, Ju, and Wu (2016) revealed that perpetrators were less assertive with people wearing provocative and attractive apparel. On the other hand, the majority of the past research stated otherwise. Carroll et al. (2016) stated that when the participants were asked about if a woman wears skimpy clothing she should not be alarmed if a guy attempted to have sex with her, 31.9% of college men and 12.3% of college women said yes. Furthermore, Wolfendale (2016) highlighted several cases in which provocative clothing led others to believe they were looking for a hookup. For example, in 2012 Vermont's Sexual Violence Task Force indicated that 60% of participants aged 18-24 stated that revealing or tight clothing welcomed sexual victimization (Wolfendale, 2016).

The third form of victim blaming involved the victims being flirtatious. Pugh, Ningard, Ven, and Butler (2016) research added that 18 of 30 college students would not intervene for a friend if they were acting promiscuously. For example, one respondent indicated that there are risks when flirting and if you are willing to take it, then go for it (Pugh et al., 2016). Another respondent added that if someone wants to hook up, then they have to be willing to accept the consequences (Pugh et al., 2016).

Perpetrators

Perpetrators can be anyone at any time. Those who are motivated and seek opportunities due to a lack of guardianship and a suitable target could be considered a potential perpetrator. However, there are several studies that point out common

characteristics that CSA perpetrators have. For example, characteristics such as low self-control, antisocial attitudes, belief in gender roles, and previously assaulted in their childhood (Franklin, Bouffard, & Pratt, 2012; Klein, Helmken, Rizzo, & Woofter, 2018). Literature explained that the most common perpetrators regarding CSA are males (Conroy & Cotter, 2017; Mellins et al., 2017; Sinozich & Langton, 2014; Testa & Cleveland 2016). Conroy and Cotter (2017) and Mellins et al. (2017) findings both concluded that 99% of the women that participated stated a male sexually assaulted them. Conroy and Cotter (2017) further mentioned that 52% of the male victims stated that their perpetrator was also male. According to Sinozich and Langton (2014), 63% of the perpetrators were White males, followed by 19% Black males. Research confirmed that when perpetrating on college campuses, the perpetrators were more likely to act alone. For instance, 90% of CSA incorporated a single perpetrator rather than a group of perpetrators (Sinozich & Langton, 2014). Conroy and Cotter (2017) added that four in five perpetrators would carry on the crime by themselves. Swartout (2015) explained that 3% of the perpetrators on a college campus made up roughly 90% of all the CSA incidents. More than often, these lone perpetrators do not have a weapon present. Sinovich and Langton (2014) stated that only 1 in 10 and Conroy and Cotter (2017) reported that only 14% of perpetrators used a weapon to threaten the victim. Both Jorgensen (2014) and Klein et al., (2018) noted that weapons were not common in sexual assault cases.

Alcohol and drugs are an easy way for perpetrators to take advantage of their victims. Perpetrators are known to hang out at bars and parties in search for overly

intoxicated people to take advantage of. Perpetrators could also slip other drugs into the victim's alcohol to make them even more impaired. Klein et al. (2018) suggested that perpetrators used alcohol as their primary weapon. One major problem when under the influence of alcohol is that students ignore consent, especially when the victim is incapacitated. Mellins et al. (2017) revealed that 57% of female student perpetrators sexually assaulted someone whenever they were incapacitated by alcohol and 54% of male perpetrators sexually victimized another student while incapacitated.

Interestingly enough, Jozkowski (2015) explained that the majority of sexual assaults that took place on college campuses was a result of a mix of misunderstanding. For example, a misunderstanding cue that is common is just because a student is at a bar or party does not necessarily mean they are looking for a hookup. Another instance that is commonly seen on a college campus is skimpy attire. If a girl is showing off cleavage or wearing a short skirt, this can be a misleading cue as consent still needs to be acquired. Jazkowski and Peterson (2013) found that 13%, of their 185 male participants, mentioned that if consent was not yet given at the time and the women objected, they would say that their penis was inserted by "mistake." Females also can sexually assault men by not asking for permission. For example, in the same study, Jazkowski and Peterson (2013) mentioned that their findings indicated that 64 out of 100 female participants stated when they performed oral sex to a male, they did not ask for permission. They stated they slowly work down, and if the male did not stop them, they continued (Jazkowski and Peterson, 2013). In conclusion, perpetrators, male or female, use a variety of different ways to take advantage of their victim.

Risk Factors

According to the routine activity theory, people who have weakened or absent capable guardianship and who present themselves as a suitable target are most likely to be victimized. Several risk factors increase the chances of college students on a college campus to be a victim of sexual assault. For example, the influence of alcohol and drugs, class rank, Greek life, and athletics can lead to a higher increase in being a victim of sexual assault.

Role of alcohol and drugs. A staple of college life is hanging out with friends and having fun at parties. However, this way of life involves binge drinking alcohol and drug use. Several studies have indicated that alcohol and drug use among college students increased sexual activity, which caused an increase in sexual assaults (Logan, Koo, Kilmer, Blayney, & Lewis, 2015; Snipes & Benotsch, 2013). The past studies indicated that 40% to 75% of all CSA occurred when alcohol or drugs were present (Abbey et al., 2014; Boyle, 2015; DiJulio et al., 2015).

Binge drinking refers to drinking a large amount of alcohol in a short duration of time. More specifically, Lannoy et al. (2017) indicated that binge drinking is commonly referred to as four or more drinks for women and five or more drinks for men within a two-hour period. College students are known to engage in binge drinking a weekly and sometimes daily basis. Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman, Schulenberg, and Miech (2014) findings indicated that 79% of college students participated in binge drinking. To grasp the bigger picture, Lipari and Jean-Francois (2016) used the data from National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs) to explain the reality of alcohol and drug use among

college students. The data indicated that approximately 5.4 million college students in the United States drank alcohol at least once a month (Lipari & Jean-Francois, 2016). This is nearly 60% of the full-time college student population in the United States. Of those students, 3.5 million were considered to take part in binge drinking (Lipari & Jean-Francois, 2016). When college is in session, on a daily average the NSDUH indicated that the approximately 1.2 million full time students drank alcohol (Lipari & Jean-Francois, 2016). Alcohol has several negative physical and psychological consequences. Lorenz and Ulman (2016) highlighted that miscommunication is one of the biggest consequences when college students drink alcohol. Drinking alcohol leads to slower reaction times, impair decision making, and slurred speech (Lorenz & Ulman, 2016). These effects result in sexual assault victimization. Past research indicated that the majority of all CSA occur when alcohol was present (Carey, Durney, Shepardson, & Carey, 2015; Testa & Cleveland, 2016). In addition, Pugh et al. (2016) stated that most prevalent sexual victimization on a college campus was alcohol related sexual assault. There is not much of a debate as nearly every study that addressed CSAs attributed it to alcohol use.

Drugs are also a problem on college campuses that result in an increase of CSA. According to Ashok, Nair, and Friedman (2016) the majority of females are sexually assaulted whenever they willingly chose to take illicit drugs. Drugs are either used recreationally or for intentionally drugging. Garnier-Dykstra, Caldeira, Vincent, O'Grady, and Arria (2012) concluded that 30% of college students used drugs for recreational use. Lipari & Jean-Francois (2016) reported that the most commonly used

drug that college students use for recreational purposes was marijuana and cocaine.

Approximately two million students in the United States use an illicit drug at least once a month and about 703,000 students use marijuana daily (Lipari & Jean-Francois, 2016).

Eshelman, Messman-Moore, and Sheffer (2015) conducted a study with 496 female college students and indicated that sexual victimization was “significantly positively” correlated with marijuana use.

Intentionally drugging is another way that drugs are used to commit sexual assaults on college campuses. Drugging occurs when someone unknowingly takes a drug that someone else intentionally gave them. In a college setting, a popular way drugging is done is by slipping a drug into someone’s drink or spiking the “juice” at a party. Swan et al. (2017) conducted a study which contained 6,064 college students. They were asked a variety of questions such as “how many times do you suspect or know that someone put a drug into your drink without your knowledge (Swan et al., 2017)?” The results indicated that 83 students answered yes to that previous question. Of those students, the two most popular motives for drugging someone was to have fun and have sex even if it was without consent (Swan et al., 2017). Another study that showed similar results was conducted by Coker, Follingstad, Bush, and Fisher (2016). Their study used 959 participants which 272 went to college and 687 never attended college. The results found that 7.8% of college men and 8.5% college women had been intentionally drugged (Coker et al., 2016). Drugging on a college campus occurs anywhere there is a party or a social gathering. Swan et al. (2017) stated that 37.4% of the participants indicated drugging took place at a house or apartment, followed by 24.2% at a fraternity, 15.4% at

a bar, 13.2% in a dorm, and 9.8% at a sorority. Whether college students use drugs or alcohol the outcome is the same, increased CSA.

Class rank. College campuses range from freshman to graduate students. The age range of these students can be anywhere from 17 to 25 or even much older. Students coming from high school adapt to college life. This entails making new friends, drinking alcohol, experiencing drugs, exploring unknown sections of campus, co-ed dorm living, and possibly having to do an initiation to get into Greek life. All of these factors make freshman year more susceptible to sexual assaults than any other year. Past research proved that there is a significant difference in CSA victimization from freshman verses seniors (Carey et al., 2015; Mellins et al., 2017; Cantor et al., 2015; Cranney, 2015). In Cranney's (2015) study, 16,000 females across 22 schools took a survey which resulted in 2 to 4.6 times more likely for a freshman student to be sexually assaulted on a college campus than higher class ranking students. Mellins et al. (2017) study found similar results as it concluded that freshman college students were the victims of sexual assaults significantly more often than the senior class. The results indicated that 21% of female freshman ($n = 224$) versus 36.4% of female seniors ($n = 225$) reported they were sexually assaulted during their time on a college campus (Mellins et al., 2017). The reason the percentage is higher for seniors is that they had four years to account for while the freshman only had one year. Mullins (2017) study also indicated that one in eight men reported they were sexually assaulted, but from freshman (9.9%) verses senior (15.6%) year the difference was deemed not statistically significant. Cantor et al. (2015) findings did not prove anything different as it showed that 17% of the 3,680 freshman participants

reported CSA, meanwhile, only 11% of the 3,738 seniors reported CSA. However, Cantor et al. (2015), suggested that freshman and sophomores were nearly equal in terms of chances of being sexually assaulted on a college campus, but after that, there is a significant drop off. All of the past studies that took class rank into account mentioned that freshman college students are more likely to get sexually assaulted than any other class.

Greek life. Greek life is an essential part of colleges across the United States. There are nearly 750,000 active members that belong to a Greek organization throughout the 1,000 college campuses that support fraternities and sororities in the United States (Hevel, Martin, Goodman, & Pascarella, 2018). Past research confirmed that Greek life contributed to more drinking, drugs, riskier behaviors, and sex partners which lead to increases of CSA (Franklin, 2016; Cranney, 2015; Mellins et al., 2017). When new students pledge to a Greek organization, they may have to perform an initiation. The initiation can be anything from being told to drink large quantities of alcohol, full filling a dare, or having to complete anything the other pledges ask them to do. However, this could be the first time those students are introduced to drinking or drugs. According to the NSDUH, 9.9% of college students will have their first drink of alcohol and 6% will experience their first illicit drug while in college. (Lipari & Jean-Francois, 2016). This pans out to be a daily average of 2,179 college students in the United States drank alcohol for their first time (Lipari & Jean-Francois, 2016). As mentioned before, when alcohol and drugs are present the likelihood of CSA increased (Abbey et al., 2014; DiJulio et al., 2015). Therefore, past literature indicated that fraternity and sorority members are more

likely to be a victim of CSA than those students who are not members of a Greek organization. Franklin (2016) performed a study with 282 female sorority members in the Northwest to understand the prevalence of sexual assault. The results indicated that there was a significant correlation with sorority members and CSA. Franklin associated the sorority member's risky routines (binge drinking and hanging out with fraternities) with sexual victimization. According to the routine activity theory when someone is involved with a risky lifestyle combined with motivated offenders and an absence of capable guardianship, victimization increases (Franklin, 2016).

Athletics. There is abundant of past literature that suggested that collegiate athletic programs are a risk factor of CSA. McCray (2015) confirmed that collegiate athletic programs are a risk factor for CSA. However, problem is much larger than what is depicted in research because universities attempt to cover sexual victimization cases up in order to protect their star athletes and their own identity. For example, in 2014, a quarterback by the name of Jameis Winston led his team to victory in the NCAA football national championship for Florida State University. Even though, in 2012 he was accused of sexually assaulting a female student. When the victim reported it, the police nor the athletic program at FSU did anything for her and eventually made her drop out of school due to threats against her to keep silent (O'Neill, 2018). Jameis himself decided to report the assault to the athletic program at FSU, but they did not file any reports in order to protect their identity and their star quarterback (O'Neill, 2018). The Dean of Students for FSU, who was in charge of handling Title IX investigations, called off the investigation. Jameis went on to be a first-round pick in the NFL draft. When he entered the NFL, the

case was reopened for investigation. After 5 years since the sexual assault was reported, Jameis agreed upon paying a \$950,000 settlement to his victim (O'Neill, 2018).

One of the largest collegiate athletic sexual victimization scandals known today occurred on Baylor University's campus in 2017. Baylor was once known for their prestige football program. However, they now are known for their daunting sexual assault scandals that have been covered up by the university. In 2017, 31 football players committed "at least" 52 counts of sexual assault on other students (O'Neill, 2018). The university bribed the victims with money and gifts to remain silent. This was not Baylor's first CSA cover up as they turned their heads on star football players such as Tre'Von Armstead, Shamycheal Chatman, and Shawn Oakman (O'Neill, 2018).

Past research indicated that college athletes are more inclined to committing sexual assaults than non-athletes. Young, Desmarais, Baldwin, and Chandler (2017) findings stated that college athletes were 77% more likely to commit a sexual assault when compared to students who were not athletes. When the participants were asked about sexual victimization, there was a 21% gap between college athletes and non-college athletes about making the other person not wear a condom (Young et al., 2017). After that, the second highest reporting showed that 32.3% of college athletes compared to 26.8% non-college athletes insisted on having sex even though the other person did not want to (Young et al., 2017). In a similar study, Wilson (2016) concluded that college athletes make up the majority of all CSA cases. In fact, Wilson (2016) study found that after examining more than 300 sexual assault reports from more than 100 universities, that 60% of the accused were college athletes even though college athletes only make up

roughly three percent of a university population. However, previous research did not confirm a clear motive as to why college athletes are more likely to commit a CSA than non-athletes. Both McCray (2015) and Wilson (2016) could not find a motive in their studies. Despite past research not understanding the motive behind college athletes committing sexual assaults, it did confirm that athletic programs and athletes are a major risk factor of CSA.

Barriers to Reporting

When discussing sexual assaults, it is important to understand the issue of reporting. According to PCAR (2018) approximately 90% of all sexual assaults go unreported. However, past literature indicated sexual assaults is even higher on a college campus. Spencer et al, (2017) concluded that out of 232 college students who stated they were sexually assaulted on a college campus, 220 or 95% did not report it their incident to authorities. Therefore, it is difficult to place an exact number of how many sexual assaults actually occur. There are several reasons why CSA is underreported, such as embarrassment, fear, personal connection with the perpetrator, and lack of education.

Embarrassment. Colleges are filled with young adults who are proving to their family and friends they are ready for the next step in life. Therefore, their family and friends are the last people they want to disappoint and tell about sexual assault victimization. Previous research indicated that embarrassment is a popular term used when describing under-reporting CSA. Schwarz, Gibson, and Lewis- Arévalo (2017) stated that embarrassment was their most common theme as to why college students did not report CSA. Furthermore, Schwarz et al. (2017) stated that one participant reported,

“I was ashamed and embarrassed that I was sexually assaulted. I was more worried about getting myself out of the situation. I didn't want anyone to know.” In addition, the work of Spencer et al. (2017) stated that 16 CSA victims in their study felt too embarrassed to report their victimization. Victims mentioned they were too embarrassed because they placed themselves in a vulnerable position (Spencer et al., 2017). The reason for not reporting due to embarrassment for male CSA survivors were not much different than females. The results from Navarro and Clevenger's (2017) found that 0% of the male participants disclosed their victimization to any family member and 53% never told anyone because they were embarrassed (Navarro & Clevenger, 2017).

Fear. Previous research indicated that fear is another reason why CSA victims did not report. Navarro and Clevenger (2017) found that over 50% of CSA victims conveyed they did not report their victimization due to fear. Fear from retaliation could be due to harassment, injury, or further victimization from the perpetrator. Spencer et al. (2017) and Navarro and Clevenger (2017) indicated that fear from retaliation and fear of being blamed were amongst the top fears according to their participants. Fearing blame happens when students are confident that their family, friends, or authorities believe they could have avoided the situation. For example, the victim may be blamed for going to a party, wearing vulnerable clothing, getting too drunk, or as simple as walking alone.

Fearing retaliation was also found in the research of Schwarz, Gibson and Lewis-Arévalo (2017) who stated that college students feared that they would be revictimized if they reported the incident to anyone. They also concluded that the feeling of fear was more evident whenever the students did not know the perpetrator because they did not

know how the stranger would act (Schwarz, Gibson, and Lewis- Arévalo, 2017).

Likewise, Sinozich and Langton (2014) found that roughly 1 in 5 students fear of the perpetrator retaliating if they would tell anyone. When comparing females to male college students, Sabina and Ho (2014) indicated that females fear retaliation more than males.

Personal connection with perpetrator. According to past literature, whenever there is a CSA, there is a high probability that the victim knows the perpetrator in which causes reporting to be low to none. Sinovich and Langton (2014) indicated that three in four sexual related crimes, the victim had personal ties to the offender. Since the victim typically knows the perpetrator, they do not report their incident. For example, the victim could be in a relationship and would not want their significant other to get in trouble. Another example that a victim's friend who "accidentally" got too drunk became more aggressive than usual, and since their friends, they do not wish to report them. Schwarz et al. (2017) stated that the most popular response they got from victims who did not report their sexual assault to anyone was that they "knew him" or "it was my friend." Other students said that they thought it was not a big enough deal to get anyone else involved (Schwarz et al., 2017). Also, Moore and Baker (2018) found that students were more likely to report if a stranger sexually victimized them. Therefore, Moore and Baker (2018) stated the incidents off-campus by committed by strangers were the most common type of sexual assault encounter to be reported to authorities.

Lack of education. Before, students enter into the hunting grounds of sexual assaults, past research confirms that they do not have the proper education on sexual assaults. Muehlenhard, Humphreys, Jozkowski and Peterson (2016) reviewed literature written on sexual assaults and confirmed that the majority of students who enter college have limited knowledge on consensual sex. Scharwz et al. (2017) indicated that a reason why victims of sexual assault do not report was that the participants did not realize it was a crime at the time. In Spencer et al. (2017) study found that 42 college female students out of 210 indicated that they did not know that they could even report being sexually assaulted. One of the participants stated, “I was unaware that that [reporting] was even an option. I have never been informed by [the university] what to do if sexually assaulted (Spencer et al., 2017).” The combination of college students not understanding what consensual sex is with not even knowing that it can be reported is why CSA is not reported often.

Campus Police

Campus police are a vital organization that universities utilize to combat crime. They are responsible for enforcing laws and university codes of conduct, making arrests, investigating crimes, traffic control, and educating students about potentially dangerous situations. Equipped to handle CSA situations, students still chose not to report to their victimization. According to Sinozich and Langton (2014), 80% of students who reported CSA encounters did not report to the campus police. Previous literature stated there are several reasons why students did not go to the campus police right away when they were a victim of sexual assault. Sinozich and Langton (2014) expressed that students did not

want the police to get the offender involved because of a fear of reprisal or they were friends. Other students mentioned they did not think it was that big of a deal for police involvement and a small sample even stated they did not believe the campus police could do anything (Sinozich & Langton, 2014). In the majority of past literature, the problem with students not reporting to the campus police is that they do not find them as legitimate officers. Allen (2017) found that students believe campus police are just there to ruin fun and shut down parties. However, campus police are much more than the party stoppers. Nearly all campus police officers today are sworn officers (Allen, 2017). According to RAINN (2020) 86% of campus police departments in the United States even have trained officers responsible for sexual violence prevention.

Counselors

Counselors that are on and around a college campus are there to assist students with prevention, education, and recovery. Unlike the campus police, college counselors are exempt from mandatory reporting as they are supposed to keep the student's information confidential (Martin, 2015). Every time a sexual assault victim enters into the presence of a campus counselor, the expert can learn valuable information to help understand why sexual assaults continue to occur. Therefore, they are in a position where they can share information that can assist with understanding common factors or high-risk places that lead to sexual assault victimization. Research has shown that there is a wide range from 4%-42% of sexual assault victims who seek help from health services that are available on or around campus (Sabina & Ho, 2014). Furthermore, the Center for Collegiate Mental Health (2018) indicated that out of 32,743 students who sought

attention from a counselor or health provider in 2017-2018, 34% experienced a sexual assault. Thus, research proves that counselors and medical are pivotal on university campuses to help prevent sexual assaults from occurring.

Summary

The routine activity theory suggested that when there is a motivated offender, a lack of capable guardianship and a suitable target-present crime will likely occur (Cohen & Felson, 1979). When applying this theory to the likelihood of sexual assault victimization on a college campus it is evident that the sexual assault rate will be high since the majority of college students leave behind their guardian, are stuck on a campus that is polluted with potential offenders, and experiences several risk factors.

Victims and perpetrators of sexual assault on college campuses can be anyone at any time. However, it is well known that females are the most susceptible victims of CSA at a staggering rate of 1 in 5 (PCAR, 2018). The victims of sexual assaults are subjected to various risks from sexually transmitted diseases to chronic mental illness even to suicide. The majority of the cases reported throughout the literature prove that the victims know the perpetrator. Unlike victims, there is little research on perpetrators. Although, research points out that the most common CSA perpetrators are males who act alone.

The literature presents several risk factors that can influence the frequency of CSA. Throughout the literature, the most frequent risk factor was alcohol and drugs. It is known that alcohol and drugs make college students more aggressive, more inclined to hooking up, and even becoming incapacitated, making it easy to target. Other risk factors that were mentioned are class rank and Greek life.

One issue with the literature on sexual assaults is that it is widespread from one study to the next. The reason for differences is because roughly 90% of all sexual assaults are not reported (PCAR, 2018). Therefore, all of the data that is presented in the literature is made from only a small sample from what is reported. There are several reasons why students do not report, but there is no definite answer. For example, embarrassment, fear, personal connection with the perpetrator, lack of education, and culture conflicts are all reasons why students do not report sexual assaults.

Universities hire campus police officers and campus counselors to help combat sexual assaults by using various prevention methods. Unfortunately, the majority of students do not go to these professionals for guidance, as they much rather tell a friend or deal with their victimization themselves.

There are several gaps in the literature, as research on sexual assaults has only scratched the surface. This study will add to the existing literature by filling the gap on the perspectives regarding the contributing risk factors that result in sexual assault victimization on the university's campus. The results of the study will be shared with university administrators, policymakers, and law enforcement agencies to implement positive social change by increasing awareness, encouraging the community to support targets/victims, and helping universities to change their policies regarding sexual assaults.

In Chapter 3, I will discuss the methodology and instruments used to gather the data. The sections of this chapter will include the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions that college students, campus police officers, and counselors have of contributing risk factors that are associated to sexual assault victimization on a college campus. Themes and concepts emerged from the data that were collected, resulting in a basis for future studies relating to sexual assaults on college campuses. This chapter includes discussion of the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Research Design and Rationale

The following research questions that guided this study:

1. What are the perceptions on risk factors that motivate offenders to commit sexual assault in a university setting?
2. What are the perceptions on risk factors that contribute to capable guardianship for incidents involving sexual assaults in a university setting?
3. What are the perceptions on risk factors that contribute to a victim being a suitable target for sexual assault in a university setting?

To best answer these questions, this study's research design was a descriptive phenomenological qualitative study. Phenomenology is centered around how perceptions and one's understanding is shaped by lived experiences (Duckham & Schreiber, 2016). Lived experiences incorporate one's perceptions, opinions, beliefs, emotions, and other characteristics (Lewis, 2015). The goal was to answer the research questions by interviewing the participants about their perceptions, feelings, and opinions on sexual

assault victimization on a college campus. Thus, using a descriptive phenomenological approach for this study was justified.

Using a qualitative study was important because it allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of why the phenomenon occurred. Secondly, it gave me the ability to explore the phenomenon by focusing on participant's opinions, feelings, and perceptions (see Koch, Niesz, & McCarthy, 2014). Therefore, the qualitative research design provided the opportunity for in-depth exploration into the contributing risk factors for sexual assaults on college campuses.

Role of the Researcher

The role of a researcher in a qualitative study is to seek in-depth information, but also understand the ethical and legalities of obtaining the information. Thus, the role of the researcher in this study included developing open-ended interview questions that were worded in a way that did not lead to confusion or harm the participants. The interview questions were pre-approved by Walden University's institutional review board (IRB). For this study to be successful, understanding how to properly email interview participants was vital. There was preparation, such as additional research, practice, and rehearsals to ensure comfortability. My role as the researcher also included ensuring that the technology worked and how to accurately document information obtained through the email interviews.

Secondly, the role of a researcher involved protecting the participants. In this study, it was necessary that the state, local, and federal guidelines were followed regarding CSA. Therefore, I conducted a comprehensive review of the guidelines. Next,

to further protect the participants, consent forms were clearly administered and strictly adhered to. To minimize bias, I asked to each participant the same interview questions, and I ensured that the questions were not be phrased in a way that led participants to answer a particular way.

Methodology

Participant Selection

The populations included in this study were located on and around a large public university situated in the Northeastern region of the United States. The university where the samples were taken had approximately 28,000 students, a team of over 100 campus police officers, and multiple of counselor offices stretching over 145 acres, according to the university's office of student affairs. The students had to be over 18 years old and attend the Northeastern university. For the campus police and counselors, they had to be located on or near the Northeastern campus.

Sampling Strategy

This study used both a convenience and snowball sampling technique. Convenience sampling is a nonprobability technique that allows the researcher to reach out to populations nearby (Emerson, 2015). I used this sampling strategy to recruit campus police officers and one counselor. The rationale for selecting this method was that each population was located in my community and easily accessible. Secondly, I used snowball sampling to recruit the student participants. The snowball sampling technique allowed me to recruit participants from word of mouth from other participants. The rationale for selecting this method was to reach out to a population that can be

difficult to gain access to because the students were dispersed due to COVID-19. Also, I was not able to gain permission to recruit on campus or use university instruments to send students information. In addition, when reading the title, “Risk Factors that Lead to Sexual Assaults on a College Campus,” students could have assumed that the study was going to ask about personal experiences dealing with sexual assaults. This can hinder participants from volunteering since they may not want to talk about such a sensitive subject. In criminology and especially in sexual assault studies, both of these sampling techniques have been used by countless researchers to meet their goals (Cook Heffron, Busch-Armendariz, Vohra, Jones Johnson, & Camp, 2014; Wells et al., 2016). Therefore, this study’s outcome achieved similar results.

Because this study incorporated a descriptive phenomenological qualitative research design, the sample size was smaller. I recruited 11 college students, three campus police officers, and one counselor. I continued to interview and collect data until the participants repeated data or no new information or perspectives were mentioned (see Ness, 2015).

In order to identify, contact, and recruit participants, I first used a snowball strategy to recruit student participants by reaching out to friends and having them send invitations to their friends, who then sent invitations to their friends, and so on. Secondly, I used a convenience sampling technique to recruit campus police and counselor participants. I used personal networking to gain contact information for participants who met the criteria.

Instrumentation

It was vital to select the correct instruments so that the data collection process would be as efficient and successful as possible to answer each research question accurately. As the researcher, I was the main instrument for this qualitative study. I conducted email interviews and drew information out from the participants by following up with the participants, taking side notes, and keeping a reflective journal. Email interviews were appropriate for this study as the world declared a pandemic with the emergence of COVID-19. This forced researchers to adapt to interviews via email or other virtual means. Even before the virus, Oltmann (2016) indicated that email interviews were increasing due to the advancement in technology. These email interviews provided participants with comfortability and flexibility for busy schedules. In addition, they were also effective because it gave the participants time to reread their responses before submitting them.

Data Collection

Data collection was essential to answer the research questions. The data collection method used for all of the participants was email interviews. This method was chosen because it could be completed during the COVID-19 lockdown, and it was quick and affordable. This method also allowed the participants to relax and complete the interview when they had time. Fritz and Vandermause (2017) stated that participants were more appreciative, receptive, and accepting to email interviews over face-to-face interviews. Lastly, using email interviews let participants control the amount of time for the interview, which decreased stress and emotion. Mason and Ide (2014) indicated that

participants in an email interview were more willing to spend more time on a question and provided more detailed information than in a face-to-face interview. Email interviews provided this study with in-depth and high-quality answers.

The data collection began with sending out invitations via participants' personal email, by either me or other participants due to the snowball sampling for students. Once a participant emailed back in response to the invitation, I then emailed the consent form along with the interview questions. The consent form provided information such as the purpose, sample questions, duration of the interview, and any questions they may have before starting. To consent to this study, all the participants had to do was email back a completed interview questionnaire. The interview consisted of nine open-ended questions that took each participant approximately 20-30 minutes. Each participant was able to answer at their convenience but was asked to submit their answers within 2 weeks from when they received the interview. The participants were informed that if they had any questions after the conclusion of the interview or if they had more data to share, they should email me. Lastly, the participants were told that a copy of the study would be sent to them when it is completed.

Data Analysis Plan

This study used thematic coding to analyze the data by hand coding the data using Microsoft Excel. Thematic coding allows researchers to expand the range of the participant's perceptions (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Because the data collection method was conducted by email interviews, the transcribing process was already completed. I then coded the text using alike words and phrases. Next, I examined the data for

categories that emerged. These categories helped determine the themes that answered the research questions.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence in the truth of the researcher's findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Credibility can be accomplished using several strategies such as member check, triangulation, peer review, and prolonged participant engagement (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). Using these strategies, credibility ensures that the research findings are an accurate interpretation of the participant's original perceptions, opinions, and beliefs (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

The first aspect of trustworthiness is credibility. To achieve credibility, I applied prolonged engagement, member checking, and data saturation. First, for prolonged engagement, the participants and I emailed back and forth to build a rapport to ease the participant into the study. Then, I gave each participant 2 weeks to complete nine research questions. During this time, the participants were able to ask questions. This was important so they would not feel rushed or stressed and did not leave out vital information. Next, member checking was used. The participants were instructed to reread their answers before returning them to me. This step provided participants the chance to refine or add any more details that they could recall. This strategy was effective because the participants are collegiate level or higher so that they are more than capable of making their answers as accurate as possible. After that, the third strategy was reaching

saturation. This means that I administered interviews until the participants repeated data. This increased the credibility by making sure all the data were gathered.

Transferability

Transferability refers to how well this study can be “transferred” and applied to other situations, settings, and individuals (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Morse (2015) stated that using thick description will achieve transferability. Thick description refers to describing not only the experiences and perceptions, but also the context so it becomes meaningful to the audience (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In this study, I used thick description when describing the populations and samples. There are also an abundance of similar populations accessible throughout the United States. Therefore, this study could be repeated and applied to similar populations to achieve similar results.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency of the study’s methods and strategies. This can be accomplished by using an audit trail. An audit trail is created by using transparency when describing the research steps (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To achieve dependability, both an audit trail and internal audit was used. I was transparent in describing each method and the rationale for using it. Also, an outside researcher was appointed to inspect the data collections, data analysis, and results of this study so that it was accurate and dependable.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to how well the findings of this study can be confirmed by other researchers. This issue of trustworthiness concentrates on whether the findings are

clearly stemmed from the experiences and not just the researcher's predispositions or bias (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To achieve confirmability, a strategy called reflexivity was used. The term reflexivity refers to the researcher's self-reflection through journaling. Using this strategy helps researchers understand and be aware of assumptions, preconceptions, and bias (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I kept a reflexive journal so that I could break down the decision making during the research process. This helped explain the rationale for the decisions that are made throughout the study.

Ethical Considerations

The primary ethical consideration for this study was to protect the rights of the human subjects. The participants for this study were all volunteers who willingly consented to take part. The primary data collection methods for this study were email interviews. The participants were asked about their feelings, opinions, and perceptions on the contributing risk factors associated with sexual assault victimization on college campuses. Seeking in depth information could have resulted in emotional risks. To bypass this potential risk, each interview question was carefully worded, so the participants were not misled or confused. The IRB preapproved the interview questions, recruiting strategies, and sampling methods so that they followed Walden's ethical guidelines (IRB approval no. 04-01-20-0749622).

To ethically engage the email interviews, a consent form was emailed to each participant's personal email. The consent form clearly stated that when the participant sent their answers back to the researcher that they gave their consent. During the entire process, each participant had the choice to depart from the study at any time. After the

interview, a debriefing took place. I asked the participant to read over their answers, and if a participant wished to change any information, they were able to at that time.

Under the codes of ethics, researchers must prepare for potential threats to confidentiality. Several precautionary measures were taken to ensure that the information that the participants shared was fully protected.

- To protect the identity of each participant, they were labeled; S1–S12 (students), C1 and C2 (Counselors), and P1–P3 (campus police officers).
- Conversations and interviews were only permitted on the participant's personal emails.
- To protect the participant's information, the information was kept in virtual folders with password access. After, the study, the information will be appropriately deleted and exposed after 5 years after the study.
- For any questions or follow-ups, the participants were provided with my email address and also Walden University's contact information.
- In case the study led to stress, emotional issues, or other personal problems information on free local professional services in the area were provided to the participants. Participants could have found this information in the consent form. For example, services included the university wellness center stress-free zone, university counseling center sexual assault coordinator, and sexual harassment and assault response and education website.

Summary

In Chapter 3, the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical considerations were discussed. The goal of answering this study's research questions required in-depth and accurate information. To achieve the necessary data, the study used a descriptive phenomenological qualitative research design. This design allowed me to gather the participant's feelings, opinions, and perceptions from students, campus police officers, and counselors. The sampling methods included the use of convenience and snowball methods that effectively and efficiently recruited enough participants for the study. The data collection methods included email interviews. Several steps throughout the interviews were taken, such as note-taking and reflective journaling. This was used to increase trustworthiness. Several ethical considerations were set in place to ensure the safety and protection of the participants. Lastly, thematic analysis was used to find emerging themes from the data.

Chapter 4 described the procedures and actions taken as the data were gathered from the email interviews. Sections that were discussed include the setting, demographics, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and results.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological qualitative study was to understand the perceptions that college students, campus police officers, and counselors had of contributing risk factors that are associated to sexual assault victimization on a large public Northeastern university. This study answered the three research questions: What are the perceptions of risk factors that motivate offenders to commit sexual assault in a university setting? What the perceptions of risk factors that contribute to capable guardianship for incidents involving sexual assaults in a university setting? What are the perceptions of risk factors that contribute to a victim being a suitable target for sexual assault in a university setting? The important factors in these three questions were based on the routine activity theory which focuses on three principals for crime to occur: motivated offender, capable guardianship, and suitable target. In this chapter, I discuss the details on the study's setting, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and results.

Research Setting

The participants were asked about their past experience regarding factors that contributed to sexual assault on a college campus via email interviews. Therefore, there were no reported personal or organizational conditions that influenced participants or their experience during time of this study that affected the results.

Demographics

The demographics that were recorded were gender, class rank, and ethnicity (see Appendix B). There was a total of 16 participants that met the requirements. Of these 16

participants, nine were female and seven were male. The student participants included seven females and four males, the counselors included two female participants, and the campus police officers included three male participants. The class rank for the students included five seniors and six graduate students. The ethnicity of all the participants in this study were Caucasian.

Data Collection

The data collection methods included using snowball and convenience sampling. The snowball sampling method was used to gather 11 student participants. To begin the snowball sampling method, I asked two friends to send out the email invitations to students who fit the study's inclusion criteria. Those students then forwarded the invitations on to their friends and so on. Each participant was given 2 weeks to complete the email interview. After 30 days, 12 student interviews had been collected; however, one was thrown out due to insufficient data, which left 11. The original plan was to collect at least 10 email interviews from students, which was met. There were no variations in the data collection from the plan presented in Chapter 3.

Convenience sampling was also used to gather three campus police officers and two counselor participants. To do so, I utilized personal networks to gather contact information of potential participants that fit the study's inclusions. I then sent an invite via personal email to these contacts. After the participants responded to the invitation, I emailed them the consent form and also the nine interview questions. The participants were given 2 weeks to return a copy of the completed email interview. Within 30 days, I had enough data. The original plan was to collect data from at least one counselor and

two police campus police officers. The goal was met as I was able to collect data from two counselors and three campus police officers that met the criteria for this study.

Data Analysis

I used thematic analysis to code the data by hand using excel. Because the data were collected via email interviews, I did not need to transcribe the data as the participants typed out their answers before submitting them. After receiving the data, I confirmed that saturation was reached when no new data or themes were emerging. To begin the data analysis process, I labeled each participant student S1-S11, counselor C1 and C2, and the campus police office P1-P3. Secondly, I read through each transcript multiple times to familiarize with the data. After that, I assigned codes to each sentence or sentences that related to the phenomenon. Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017) stated that coding provided the researcher the opportunity to break down and concentrate on the important aspects of the data by attaching labels that are in connection to a larger theme. For example, S5 mentioned,

I believe most sexual assaults would occur at on campus housing. This would be the most likely place for sexual assaults to occur as a result of assailants looking to coerce their victims back to a private setting where the assailant would think there would be minimal risk of witnesses.

I coded this as on-campus housing. After going through and coding all of the transcribed data there were 44 different codes used which then were later compressed into categories and themes (see Appendix A).

The next step in thematic analysis was to form categories using the codes. Categories are formed by using a group of similar codes. Therefore, I organized the 44 codes and grouped alike codes to create 13 categories. For example, codes such as fraternities and sororities were categorized as Greek life, and codes such as night-time, late, dark alleys, evening classes were categorized into time of day (see Appendix A).

The last step in thematic analysis was to create themes from the categories. Nowell et al. (2017) stated that emerging themes encapsulate vital information related to the research questions. The raw data were broken down into codes then categories, which created five themes. For example, the codes freshman, seniors, upperclassman, sororities, fraternities, football players, and jocks formed the categories of class rank, Greek life, and athletics. The emerging theme to describe all of that data was empowerment. This theme helped answer the first research question: What are the perceptions on factors that motivate offenders to commit sexual assault in a university setting? Using thematic analysis, the raw data were organized in a meaningful order that derived from codes to create categories and into emerging themes.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

As described in Chapter 3, the credibility strategies used were prolonged participant engagement, member checking, and reaching saturation. The first strategy, prolonged engagement, was crucial in collecting deep and rich data. The participants and I emailed back and forth building a rapport, and I gave the participants enough time to complete the interview. Interviews consisted of nine open-ended questions, so I gave a

timeline of 2 weeks from when the participant received the interview. Several participants sent their interviews back within 1 week, and all but three interviews were sent back by the 2-week mark. Because the data had not yet been analyzed, the data from the last three interviews were still useful. At the end of 30 days, I had received 11 completed interviews. For the second strategy, member checking, I had participants reread and adjust any information before returning their interview. The strength of email interviewing was that participants could easily go back to edit their information before submitting. The participants were allotted enough time to go back and change anything before the results were analyzed. For the third strategy, reaching saturation, I continued administering interviews until the data repeated itself. For example, in the snowball strategy, I told friends to keep sending out invitations and having those people send out invitations until further notice. At the same time, I reached out to contacts who were already in the role of a campus police officer and counselor or had contacts to those professionals. Once I had collected interviews from about six students, two campus police officers, and one counselor, the data had already started to repeat itself. However, I allowed more interviews to come in, which added to the credibility. For example, for the interview question, “What types of circumstances in a university setting could lead to someone being a victim of sexual assault?,” the first five interviews mentioned being alone after dark. After that, a total of 10 interviews mentioned something similar. For the student interviews, the data repeated early on, but the campus police and counselor data added data. For example, the students talked about house parties and bars, whereas the campus police and counselors repeated information about dorms.

Transferability

When discussing transferability in Chapter 3, I stated that the study could be applied to similar populations and achieve similar results because thick descriptions were used in this study. This strategy did not change over the course of the study. I used as much detail as possible when discussing the populations and samples. For example, I stated who the participants were, where the participants were located, and further details about the populations. I also described the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the students, campus police officers and counselors. I clearly indicated the sampling methods such as snowballing and convenience sampling and how they were used to recruit participants. All of these details and descriptions increase the transferability for other researchers to conduct a similar study.

Dependability

The third aspect of trustworthiness discussed in Chapter 3 was dependability. The approach to achieve dependability did not change. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I used an audit trail and appointed an outside researcher to examine the data collections, data analysis, and results of the study. The audit trail was accomplished by maintaining transparency and explaining the rationale of each method and strategy used. I then had another doctoral student check over the data collections, data analysis, and results of the study to make sure it was sound. No changes were made as the outside researcher confirmed that the information was accurate.

Confirmability

The last strategy for trustworthiness was confirmability. The study achieved confirmability through reflexivity. I kept a log of the research process and practices used throughout the study. Keeping a reflective journal helped explain the rationale for the decisions that were made throughout the study. For example, I reflected upon the selection of the topic, the methodology and data analysis.

Results

For this study, I interviewed via email 11 students, three campus police officers, and two counselors. The interviews consisted of nine open-ended questions asking the participants about motivated offenders, capable guardianship, and suitable targets. After the data were coded and categorized, there were five themes that emerged: college experience, empowerment, setting, appearance, and lack of protection. These themes helped answer the three research questions: What are the perceptions on risk factors that motivate offenders to commit sexual assault in a university setting? What are the perceptions on risk factors that contribute to capable guardianship for incidents involving sexual assaults in a university setting? What are the perceptions on risk factors that contribute to a victim being a suitable target for sexual assault in a university setting?

Theme 1: College Experience

The college experience is notorious for partying that involves alcohol, drugs and hooking up. All 16 of the participants agreed that alcohol and drugs were a major risk factor regarding CSA. Throughout the data the term *alcohol* was used 90 times, *intoxicated* was used nine times, and the term *drug* was used 26 times. C1 stated that in

their experience drugs and alcohol were the leading causes of sexual assaults on college campuses. P1 and P2 indicated that parties involving alcohol make it too easy for sexual assaults to occur. S10 stated, "Alcohol is the main cause of campus sexual assaults. It leads to risky behavior and places students in undesirable situations." S3 added that, "I believe the use of drugs and alcohol would lead to more sexual assaults."

Drugs and alcohol were a leading risk factor for sexual assaults to occur because it plays a role for both the victims and offenders. When the participants were asked, "What types of circumstances in a university setting could lead to someone being a victim of CSA?" P3 stated that, "Alcohol makes students more susceptible and easier targets. It also makes people pass out which places them at risk." S1 indicated that, "Alcohol can make you lose control of your body, slur words and impair vision." Key phrases that participants mentioned when describing the role alcohol played on victims was blacking out, defenseless, impaired vision and thinking, slurring words, and passing out. All of the phrases described makes it easier for a student to be taken advantage of and sexually assaulted. Thus, making them suitable targets.

In addition, alcohol played an important role for motivated offenders. When the participants were asked, "What types of circumstances in a university setting could lead to someone being an offender or of CSA?" S7 stated, "Alcohol can reduce the inhibitions of the offender. This may cause the offender to act on desires or urges that they would otherwise resist." Four participants (S8, S9, C1, P2) mentioned that alcohol motivated offenders because it made them more aggressive and bolder than they normally would be.

Theme 2: Empowerment

The theme of empowerment included those students who held power or clout over the rest of the students. According to the results, students that were in a position of power included upperclassman, athletes, and Greek life members.

Class rank was mentioned as a risk factor for sexual assaults on college campuses throughout the data. S9 suggested that college campuses offered a mix of freshman and upperclassman which the upperclassman would take advantage of new students. Also, the professionals such as P1 mentioned, "Underclassmen attending parties while being in a new environment and being taken advantage of by upperclassmen." For the majority of the new students and freshman this is the first time they are partying with upperclassman. S2 stated,

Freshmen are young and inexperienced with alcohol. These settings are a mesh of freshmen looking to party for the first time, and with alcohol flowing freely, everyone is underage and consuming large amounts of alcohol, often for the first time.

Due to being inexperienced, class rank is a risk factor regarding CSA and freshman are deemed a suitable target while upperclassman are motivated offenders.

The second position of power under this theme was athletes. Being a star athlete on a college campus can hold the most power of any student on a campus. Athletes were mentioned five times under the question, "What types of circumstances in a university setting could lead to someone being an offender of sexual assault?" S10 stated that athletes think their able to get with whoever whenever and end up forcing sexual

encounters. Not only do students believe that athletics were part of the CSA issue, but the campus police and counselors did as well. P2 stated that, “Under the microscope are the athletes that use their power to gain an advantage.” C2 described an athletes’ position on a college campus,

Athletes, the stars on the team tend to believe they are invincible at times. They get all the attention and people in their community love them. They take advantage when they’re not in the spotlight and go out to clubs or parties thinking they can do whatever they wish. If they end up doing something they should not have done, no one will speak up against them because of their status. Universities will also protect their star athletes because that is where they get a lot of money coming in from.

The results showed, the perceptions of the participants indicated that student athletes end up committing CSA because either no one will speak up or the university will just turn their heads. Exercising leverage and power, athletes can be motivated to commit sexual assaults on college campuses.

The third position of power under this theme was Greek life. The results indicated there were ten references on Greek life with eight participants mentioning that Greek life increases CSA. S10 mentioned that, “People in power such as the highest members in a frat can think their able to get with whoever whenever and force things.”

P2 stated,

It is common to hear about sexual assault situations involving Greek life. They are set up to do good deeds around the community and support school values, but

when they decide to party its dangerous. They tend to give females free drinks all night and invite a lot of underclassman.

When S2 was asked, “Where do you believe sexual assaults are most prevalent in a university setting? Why?” S2 stated,

Fraternity parties likely have the most prevalent sexual assaults because many of the people there are freshmen, so they are young and inexperienced with alcohol. These settings are a mesh of freshmen looking to party for the first time, and with alcohol flowing freely (at most a \$5 cover fee to attend), everyone is underage and consuming large amounts of alcohol, often for the first time. Judgement is impaired and there aren't any sober supervisors to prevent incidences.

The results indicated that both students and the campus police officers believed that Greek life was a major risk factor towards CSA.

Theme 3: Setting

The third emerging theme was the setting. The setting entailed time and location that contributed to CSA. The term night was used 17 times, late was used 5 times, and dark was used 6 times. These terms were what the participants used to describe what time of day the CSA most likely occurs. Therefore, the results suggested that late at night on a college campus is a risk factor. S9 stated, “You will see more sexual assaults in the activities that are at night.” S2, S3 and S4 all suggested that the riskiest time to be out on a college campus is at night. However, sometimes it is unavoidable because students may be forced to take night classes. S1 and S7 mentioned that walking to and from night classes raises fear of being a victim of sexual assault. Three of the participants elaborated

why walking around at night can make for a suitable target. S7, S9 and P2 stated that the setting on college campuses have a lack of lighting where frequent travel routes are.

The second risk factor under the setting theme that the results indicated was the location of where CSA was likely to occur. When the participants were asked, “Where do you believe sexual assaults are most prevalent in a university setting?” The participants indicated the most popular place was at the bar (19 references) and house parties (9 references) followed by dormitories, concerts, and sporting events. S10 stated, “I believe bars. There is loud music, dim lights, and plenty of alcohol. All of these make students vulnerable to be a victim of sexual assault.” The results indicated that all three of the campus police officers and both counselors had dorms in their answers. P1 stated, “Dorms. That’s where students live and where most of the social gatherings take place at.” P2 stated, “Parties, dorms, apartments, and bars are where most sexual assaults occur. These spots present vulnerability. The students get wrapped up in the college mindset and make risky choices.” This theme described that certain locations on campus had motivated offenders, lack of capable guardianship and suitable targets.

Theme 4: Appearance

The fourth theme that emerged from the results was the student’s appearance. In this study appearance is referred to as what the victims wear and how they present themselves to make them vulnerable to CSA. The results indicated that a college student’s appearance make them suitable targets for CSA. Five participants mentioned that students who dressed provocatively were more likely to be sexually assaulted as they were unintentionally inviting offenders to them. P3 stated “Students looking for attention

that dress in a certain way or say something that leads others to believe they are looking for sex.” S1 added, “They figure if a girl is dressed provocative and is talking to them all night, she wants to hook up.” However, appearance goes for both females and males as S11 stated, “We are dealing with younger guys or younger girls if guys are walking around with their shirts off girls are going to look and make assumptions.” Another term mentioned that attributed to appearance was “eye catching.” C2 indicated by wearing clothes that are eye catching will increase the chance of becoming a victim of CSA. Again, bringing in attention by dressing a certain way will make others believe that one is looking for a hookup.

Theme 5: Protection

The fifth theme that emerged from the results was a lack of protection. College is the first time the majority of students leave behind friends and family that protected them throughout their childhood. The results first indicated that students would be more likely to experience sexual assaults when walking alone. S7 stated, “Walking alone in unfamiliar areas can place students at risk for a sexual assault attack.” S2 added, “It is also risky to walk around a campus alone because there isn’t a safety net to protect an assault of any kind.” When asked, “What can students do in a university setting to protect themselves from being a victim of sexual assault?” Nine of the participants went on to say that using a buddy system or walking with friends would deter motivated offenders from approaching them. S3 stated, “I think the biggest thing that students can do to protect themselves would be to never travel alone and use the buddy system with someone they trust.” S3 added, “Something I do to protect myself when I run alone is

share my phone location with a handful of trusted people which I think would be smart for university students to do as well.” Other participants such as S4 and S5 mentioned to carry pepper spray and P1, S5, S6, and S7 mentioned enrolling in some kind of defense classes would help keep them safe.

The second result the under the lack of protection theme indicated a lack of campus police officers presence. C2 and S1 agreed that there was not enough campus police officers present. Campus police officers are propelled by the university to ensure student’s safety throughout the campus is met. S7 stated, “If there is low confidence in a university’s safety measures and in the police forces’ ability to protect students on campus, then sexual assault perpetrators may be more likely to attempt sexual assault.” It was interesting that S10 brought up the importance of policing tactics by saying, “If campus police officers would patrol on foot instead of driving in a car they would feel more protected from being sexually assaulted.” Using different tactics like community policing could be beneficial in a college setting.

The third factor the results indicated was a lack of education. With varying definitions and understandings of what sexual assault is, it causes confusion and leads students astray. The results proved that students who did not fully understand what is right from wrong were suitable targets. S11 stated, “I did not understand what sexual assault was so when I would see a friend getting smacked in the butt we would just laugh it off and think anything of it.” Furthermore, S1 reported, “Most people do not realize what consent means.” Whether it is walking alone, lack of campus police officers present,

and lack of education or a combination, it can result in an increase of sexual assaults due to a lack of protection.

Summary

The research questions were answered by the five emerging themes, college experience, empowerment, setting, appearance, and lack of protection. The themes were created by the results which explored risk factors based on the core principles of the routine activity theory. The data proved that the most popular risk factors associated with suitable targets regarding sexual assaults were drugs and alcohol, appearance, lack of education, walking alone, and out after dark. Next, the data proved that the most popular risk factors associated with motivated offenders were drugs and alcohol, being a member of Greek life, athletes, and class rank. Lastly, the data proved that the most popular risk factors associated with capable guardianship regarding sexual assaults were lack of campus police officers and lack of friends.

Chapter 5 will discuss the implications of the findings, limitations, recommendations, and implications for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions that college students, campus police officers, and counselors had of contributing risk factors associated with sexual assault victimization on a Northeastern college campus. I used a descriptive phenomenological qualitative design to gather the perceptions and opinions of college students, campus police officers, and counselors. This study incorporated both snowball and convenience sampling methods to collect data. I used thematic analysis to hand code the data to find emerging themes.

This study was conducted because sexual assaults are a problem on college campuses. Past literature highlighted that sexual assaults on college students cause decreasing education attainment, heightening their level of fear, increasing depression, and increasing alcohol and drug addictions (Combs et al., 2014; Fedina et al., 2018).

The findings indicated five themes regarding factors that contributed to sexual assaults occurring on a college campus in Northeastern United States. These five themes were college experience, title of empowerment, setting, appearance, and lack of protection. In the findings, there were several key takeaways that confirmed and expanded on past literature.

Interpretation of the Findings

In this section, I discuss the relationship between the data gathered in the current study and the past literature presented in Chapter 2. The participants mentioned meaningful information that either confirmed or expanded upon the previous research that was used in the literature review.

College Experience

The current study concluded that drugs and alcohol were perceived as the number one risk factors that caused CSA. In the current study, all 16 participants indicated that drugs and alcohol was connected to CSA. Similarly, Abbey et al. (2014), Boyle (2015), and DiJulio et al. (2015) found that 40% to 75% of all CSA occurred when alcohol or drugs were used and also cited that it was the top factor in CSA. In addition, Testa and Cleveland (2016) and Carey et al. (2015) found that drugs and alcohol were the main risk factors of CSA.

In the current study, participants indicated that drugs and alcohol made victims pass out, lose control of their body, slur words, and have impaired vision. Thus, drugs and alcohol created suitable targets. This aligned with past literature. DiJulio et al. (2015) found that the most common way for a college student to make themselves a suitable target was by drinking alcohol and using drugs because of losing control of their bodies.

Next, the current study indicated that participants believed drugs and alcohol made students more aggressive. Therefore, drugs and alcohol also created motivated offenders. This statement supported previous literature. Quade (2019) and Orchowski et al. (2016) found that binge drinking was correlated to motivated offenders because of how it made them more aggressive. The current study corroborated past literature indicating that drugs and alcohol caused suitable targets and motivated offenders, which increased the risk of CSA.

Empowerment

Another finding of this study was that empowerment was seen as a major risk factor of CSA. In the current study, participants suggested that empowerment permitted students to get away with CSA. More specifically, the perceptions of the participants indicated that athletes were more likely to commit a sexual assault because they could get away with it. Thus, students who joined athletics were likely to be motivated offenders. Similarly, as noted in Chapter 2, Young et al. (2017) found that college athletes were 77% more likely to commit a sexual assault when compared to college students who were not athletes.

Next, five of the participants in the current study mentioned that class rank was a risk factor of CSA. This aligned with past literature as Carey et al. (2015), Cantor et al. (2015), Cranney (2015), and Mellins et al. (2017) all suggested that freshmen were significantly more likely to be a victim of sexual assault, whereas the perpetrators tended to be in a higher class.

Lastly, the current study resulted in eight participants mentioning that Greek life is a CSA risk factor. This finding was similar to the findings of Cranney (2015), Franklin (2016), and Mellins et al. (2017), who found that Greek life also increased the risk of CSA. In fact, Franklin found a significant correlation between Greek life and CSA because of the risky activities that they perform. The current study supported findings of past literature that athletes, class rank, and Greek life caused motivated offenders, which increased the risk of CSA.

Setting

The third finding of this study was that the university setting was considered a risk factor of CSA. Nearly three fourths of the participants mentioned that CSA was most prominent at night. Thus, nighttime on college campuses was perceived as creating suitable targets. This aligned with the studies of Lindo et al (2018) and Kerner et al. (2017), who found higher rates of CSA were from midnight to 6 am. The high rates of CSA late at night can be attributed to walking to and from evening classes, partying, or having fewer campus police officers on duty.

The current study also added that different locations on a college campus were considered a risk factor for CSA. The participants' perceptions varied on locations such as dorms, houses, apartments, and bars. The results of the current study indicated that CSA was seen as most likely to occur at a house/frat followed by dorms and bars. This aligned with Swan et al.'s (2017) findings that 37.4% of the participants indicated a house or apartment, followed by 24.2% at a fraternity, 15.4% at a bar, 13.2% in a dorm, and 9.8% at a sorority. At these locations, campus police officers are not present, alcohol is abundant, and students look to "hook up." Therefore, there is a lack of capable guardianship, motivated offenders, and suitable targets which is recipe for crime to occur according to the routine activity theory. The current study confirmed findings of past literature that time of day and location increased the risk of CSA.

Appearance

The fourth finding of this study was that appearance was considered a risk factor for CSA. The perceptions of 40% of the participants in the current study indicated that

appearance led to CSA. Therefore, dressing provocatively was believed to create suitable targets. This aligned with previous literature of Johnson et al. (2016), Carroll et al. (2016), and Wolfendale (2016), who suggested that 30%-60% of college students who wear skimpy, tight, or revealing clothing increased their risk of being a victim of CSA. The current study supported past literature that indicated that appearance created suitable targets and increased the risk of CSA.

Lack of Protection

The last finding of this study was that CSA increased when students lacked protection. The results of the current study indicated that walking alone from night classes, to parties, or jogging around increased the threat of CSA victimization. Thus, walking alone created a suitable target and lack of capable guardianship. This was similar to the findings of Bedera and Nordmeyer (2015), who found that one of the main tips for being safe from CSA is never to be alone.

Next, the current study indicated that a lack of education by college students is considered a risk factor for CSA. Not understanding what is considered sexual assaults created suitable targets. This confirmed past literature as Muehlenhard et al. (2016) stated that the majority of college students did not understand what consensual sex was. The current study confirmed past literature that a lack of protection and education created suitable targets and lack of capable guardianship which increased the risk of CSA.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation that held true throughout the study was the small sample size. The sample size included 11 students, three campus police officers, and two counselors.

This was not a representation of the entire population. Therefore, this small sample size decreased the study's reliability. However, because it was a qualitative design which incorporated interviews that gathered deep and rich data, the small sample size was justified.

The second limitation was sampling bias. The study used snowball and convenience sampling methods. The snowball sampling started with my friends reaching out to their friends, so the participants were not random. In addition, the people who had the most likely recruited the majority of the participants and potentially have similar views. The convenience sampling was also not random. I gained participants by using networking, thus only participants associated within my network participated.

The third limitation stemmed from the use of email interviews. Using email interviews restricted me from collecting nonverbal gestures and cues. I also could not ask as many probing questions to get more in depth about a given topic.

Recommendations

My first recommendation for future studies is to include a more diverse population as this study's participants lacked diversity. All of the student participants were seniors or graduate students and they were all Caucasian. This was likely due to the snowball sampling methods. However, studies such as those by Coulter et al. (2017), Ford and Soto-Marquez (2016), and Cantor et al. (2015) highlighted the importance of including a diverse population. Thus, integrating different ethnicities, class rank, and sexual orientation would allow new information about CSA to be captured.

The second recommendation is to use focus groups for the data collection method. This would be helpful to gather different perceptions that this study did not touch upon because the participants could build off from one another. The researcher would be able to incorporate subquestions, which would get more detailed in-depth information that lacked in the email interview process.

The third recommendation is to use a quantitative approach towards the current study. Using a quantitative research design would allow more participants to take part, which could increase the reliability and enhance the generalization of the results. It could also decrease sampling bias as administering surveys would randomize the participant pool.

Implications

Positive Social Change

This study on contributing risk factors associated with CSAs is relevant to Walden's mission of social change because it is a research problem that needs attention. This research study promoted positive change by highlighting the risk factors that contribute to CSAs, which will introduce new implications that can be made to decrease CSAs. This change will start at the organizational level on the Northeastern university in the United States. Once proactive measures are implemented on the campus, this may then lead other universities alike to help decrease sexual assaults. Thus, this positive social change will result in the improvement of the students and social conditions on campus.

The first recommendation for the university is to install more nighttime lighting throughout the campus. With the finding of the study that sexual assaults are more prominent after dark, additional lighting can help decrease CSA.

The second recommendation is to create a new sexual assault education program. For example, the university can introduce the Enhanced Access, Acknowledge, Act. This is a 12 hour (split into four sessions) mini workshop for women who want to learn about sexual assault victimization. Senn, Eliasziw, Hobden, Newby-Clark, Barata, Radtke, and Thurston (2017) stated that this program is effective on college students for up to two years. This would be a great program to help students be better equipped, so they are not the next victim of CSA.

The third recommendation is to increase awareness. Every April, the university puts together a month of awareness for sexual assaults, but awareness must continue throughout the year. This can as simple as inviting students to webinars via email, reminding students how to report sexual assault cases since the reporting is low, or introducing them to SafeRider program which is an escort service that takes students to their destination at night or early morning. However, right now students are limited to 25 rides per semester (roughly 105 days). If the university increased the number of rides, it could decrease the amount of CSA.

Conclusion

CSA is an ongoing problem that needs attention. Sexual assaults impact students by causing health, mental, and physical issues that can be life long and life altering. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand contributing risk factors that are

associated with sexual assault victimization on a college campus by focusing on perceptions of students, campus police officers, and counselors.

There were five important themes that emerged from the data which were college life, setting, appearance, empowerment, and lack of protection. Within these five themes, there were several risk factors that came to light that cause CSA. Drugs and alcohol were the top risk factors that students, campus police officers, and counselors all agreed upon. Other risk factors that were revealed were being out after dark, wearing provocative clothing, attending Greek life events, walking alone, being affiliated with the athletic programs, lack of education on sexual assaults. According to the theoretical framework, the routine activity theory, these risk factors included one or more of the following principals, suitable target, motivated offender, lack of capable guardianship which is why sexual assaults were likely to occur. By providing public policy decision makers and university officials with this data they will be able to formulate and/or change policies on safety issues and concerns about sexual assaults on university campuses. Therefore, understanding these risk factors means this study has begun to close the gap by contributing to the body of knowledge needed to address this problem.

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Appendix A: Thematic Analysis

Codes	Categories	Themes
Excessive drug use Slur words Impair vision intoxicated Mix drinks Binge drinking Blacking out Peer pressure	Drug use/ Alcohol use	College Experience
Hooking up Partying Attending concerts Attending sporting events	Social events	
Freshman Seniors Upper classman	Class rank	Empowerment
Fraternities Sororities	Greek Life	
Football players Jocks	Athletics	
Dark alleys Night time Late Evening classes	Time of day	Setting
Lack of campus police Lack of lighting	University Surroundings	
House/apartments University in a city Bars Dorms	Location	
Wearing skimpy outfits Revealing Taking off clothes	Clothing selection	Appearance
Flirty sexy eye catching Dancing	Attractiveness	
Being alone on campus Walking with friends Traveling in groups	Buddy system	Protection
Defense classes Pepper spray Whistle	Personal defense	
Campus police Education on sexual assaults	University resources	

Appendix B: Demographics

Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Class Rank
S1	Female	Caucasian	Grad
S2	Male	Caucasian	Grad
S3	Female	Caucasian	Grad
S4	Female	Caucasian	Senior
S5	Male	Caucasian	Grad
S6	Female	Caucasian	Senior
S7	Female	Caucasian	Grad
S8	Male	Caucasian	Senior
S9	Female	Caucasian	Grad
S10	Male	Caucasian	Senior
S11	Female	Caucasian	Senior
C1	Female	Caucasian	n/a
C2	Female	Caucasian	n/a
P1	Male	Caucasian	n/a
P2	Male	Caucasian	n/a
P3	Male	Caucasian	n/a

Appendix C: Interview Questions

- Where do you believe sexual assaults are most prevalent in a university setting?
Why?
- What types activities in a university setting lead to sexual assaults?
- What types of circumstances in a university setting could lead to someone being a victim of sexual assault?
- What types of circumstances in a university setting could lead to someone being an offender of sexual assault?
- What can students do in a university setting to protect themselves from being a victim of sexual assault?
- Who can prevent sexual assaults? How?
- What role does alcohol play in a university setting for victims of sexual assault?
- What role does alcohol play in a university setting for offenders of sexual assault?
- Would you like to add any additional information regarding the prevention of sexual assaults in university settings?