

**Distrust and Disconnect: A Comprehensive Analysis of the Sexual Assault Environment at
the University of Pittsburgh**

by

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Sexual assault is a complex issue that affects countless individuals across the United States, including college students. Though what constitutes sexual assault is difficult to define, the experience of survivors following an assault can be just as complex. Survivors may reach out to friends and family for immediate support, but they may also request therapy, medical interventions, or legal recourse. In the university setting, these institutions and agencies are uniquely designed with the intention of meeting the needs of students, but how effective are they in achieving this goal? This study focused on analyzing the experiences of survivors of sexual assault and assessing the efficacy of campus resources for survivors. A mixed methods approach was used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data for analysis. In the first phase, an online survey was administered to the general student body to assess the prevalence of sexual assault at the University of Pittsburgh, risk factors for assault, and student opinion of the efficacy of campus resources. The second phase of the study involved conducting interviews with students who were survivors of assault and administrative personnel involved in providing support. These administrators included representatives from the Title IX office, Pitt Police, and the Counseling Center.

Results of this analysis showed that 26.57% of respondents experienced sexual assault in college and 81.94% knew someone who had been assaulted. These results were analyzed in the context of masculinity, patriarchy, male privilege, and substance use to contextualize prevalence

and risk factors for assault at the University of Pittsburgh. The interviews also revealed the systematic ways in which students experience structural violence and a “second assault” due to tolling investigative procedures, racial background, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Throughout this analysis, the themes of distrust and disconnect underscore the varied ways in which student needs and institutional perceptions misalign. The study concludes with recommendations for future research, areas of improvement for campus policy, and an analysis of potential legislation that could fundamentally alter the present sexual assault environment.

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1.0 Introduction

Sexual assault is a major public health crisis that has plagued college campuses across the United States for decades. A study conducted by the United States Department of Justice in 2007 reported that nearly 20% of female undergraduate students in the research population experienced some form of sexual assault (Krebs et al., 2007). A study conducted at the University of Pittsburgh in 2015 demonstrated that 10.1% of female undergraduate students experience forced penetrative assault and 15.6% experience unwanted touching or groping before graduation (Cantor et al., 2015). Sexual assault can be defined in several different ways and with varying severity. A major distinction can be made between forced sexual assault that occurs as a result of physical violence or threats and non-physical assault, which is defined by verbal or visual advances. Forced sexual assault may also fall under the category of incapacitated sexual assault, whereby an individual is unable to provide consent due to alcohol consumption, drug usage, or other cognitive impairments (Krebs et al., 2007). Following an incident of assault, students may also seek support resources through their universities, which have been shown to have both positive and negative effects on the experience of survivors (Breitenbecher, 2005; Buchholz, 2015).

Sexual assault in college, as described above, involves the intersection of several different phenomena in a complex and intricate way. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to better understand sexual assault at the University of Pittsburgh and investigate risk factors that predispose individuals for assault. Careful consideration is given to experiences with university support institutions to determine if these resources help survivors recover or cause additional harm. The study also serves to share survivor narratives and suggest recommendations to improve university institutions that offer support to survivors. To achieve these goals, quantitative data was collected

through a survey that was open to the entire student body. The survey served as a preliminary analysis and provided a general description of assault risk factors and trends that survivors of assault had in common. Using the results of this analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted to better contextualize trends that appeared in the quantitative portion of the study. The interviews were conducted with survivors of assault and university personnel involved in providing support to survivors. Using an integrative approach, that incorporated quantitative and qualitative methods in a multifaceted design, this study served to examine the sexual assault environment at the University of Pittsburgh and bridge the gap between students and those who possess the power to govern them.

In this study, I focused exclusively on physical cases of sexual assault, including unwanted touching, groping, or penetration resulting from the use of physical coercion or incapacitation. Though the case of sexual harassment is also a pressing concern, it is difficult to arbitrarily determine the boundary between harassment and assault (Krebs et al., 2007; Sanday, 2007; Mulla, 2014). By limiting sexual assault to physical acts of violence at the University of Pittsburgh, my study focused on determining risk factors for assault, analyzing power relationships as they pertain to sexual violence, and identifying policy measures that can be implemented to improve the support provided to survivors by the university. A study that investigated non-physical forms of sexual assault would involve several of the same variables as this study, though it would likely identify additional risk factors for sexual harassment. Non-physical forms of sexual assault would also have to be carefully defined in order to study both physical and non-physical types of assault in a comprehensive analysis. However, the results of such a study could have potential benefits on the prevention of sexual assault, as both cases can occur in tandem over extended periods of time (Krebs et al., 2007; Henrick, 2013; Mellins et al., 2017). Other authors have performed similar

ethnographies at collegiate institutions and defined sexual assault in other ways. Typically, distinctions are made between rape and harassment, wherein harassment is not a physical form of assault, but rape is (Krebs et al., 2007; Sanday, 2007; Mulla, 2014; Schwartz & Dekeseredy, 1997). Sexual coercion is also another form of sexual assault, which refers to the use of substances, words, or force to coax another individual into a form of intercourse (Schwartz & Dekeseredy, 1997). This study does include an analysis of sexual coercion, but it will be described using the generic term, sexual assault.

The study was performed in its entirety at the University of Pittsburgh in accordance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines and regulations. Several anthropological frameworks, theories, and conceptual tools were used as guiding principles in this analysis. These principles will be discussed extensively in the next section. The study's procedures are described in detail in the methodology section and the research tools used to collect data can be found in the appendix. The results of this analysis will also be split into several subcategories, separating the quantitative data from each qualitative narrative. Proposed legislation that would alter the landscape of the sexual assault environment will also be briefly discussed and contextualized within the scope of survivor narratives. Finally, the paper will conclude with a consideration of study limitations, recommendations for university administration, and topics that require further research.

Before I describe the theoretical frameworks employed in this analysis, I wish to describe myself, my identity, and how that shaped this study. Currently, I am a senior at the University of Pittsburgh with a double major in Mathematical Biology and Anthropology. I am a heterosexual male of South Asian descent and have taken on several different roles over the past four years. From being part of an a cappella team to serving as a physics teaching assistant and being a member of several clubs, I have heard countless individuals recount their own and others' experiences of

sexual assault. I have also heard numerous accounts of sexual exploits, predominantly from male students, that speak to a problematic gendered logic that entails potential for harm. Hearing about the widespread prevalence of assault and meeting friends who had experienced sexual assault are what inspired me to pursue this work in the first place. Being a part of the spaces described above also exposed me to different forms of masculinity that vary across culture and upbringing, contributing to potentially harmful cultural and gendered logics that permit sexual violence. While the logics described in this study do not pertain to all individuals, I hope to present specific accounts of violence that stem from, among other factors, patriarchy and masculinity. My gender identity, sexual orientation, and experiences with masculinity have also played a role in framing the analysis I present in this study, particularly with respect to the women who were my interview subjects. These women described perhaps the most difficult experience they have ever had in order for me to complete this work. In analyzing this work, I hope to privilege these accounts that are far too often silenced and acknowledge that this work could not have been completed had it not been for these exceptional women.

1.1 Theoretical Frameworks

During this study, when I refer to the “sexual assault environment”, I specifically mean those individuals who are survivors of assault or know someone who has survived assault, the institutions put in place to deter sexual assault and uphold campus regulations, and the support and recovery resources offered to assault survivors by the University of Pittsburgh. The literature adopts a variety of terms to refer to individuals who have experienced sexual assault, including victims, patients, and survivors. I have chosen to adopt the term survivors, not because of its

positive connotations with overcoming a difficult experience, but because this term is what individuals wanted me to refer to them as. Henrick and Mellins et al also use the term survivor to describe individuals who are mobile, empowered, and actively engaged in the recovery process following an incident of assault (Henrick, 2013; Mellins et al., 2017). Assault survivors have been victimized enough by means of their experience, unjust legislation, and negative social perceptions (Henrick, 2013). By adopting the term survivor, I claim that individuals reassert the autonomy that society often tends to deprive them of when viewing them merely as victims of a horrendous act. This term also allows individuals to express a form of agency that society tends to strip away at the point of assault, by subjecting a person to rigorous physical examination, careful interrogation, and often difficult grief counseling. In her ethnography, Mulla refers to this societal treatment as a “second rape” that survivors can equate with the initial act of violence (Mulla, 2014). In this study, I apply Mulla’s concept to the “second assault” whereby institutions designed to protect students from experiencing harm actually do harm to survivors of assault.

While survivors of assault may experience harm due to difficult investigative procedures, institutional personnel also face distress when acts of sexual violence are not effectively responded to. This phenomenon is known as institutional betrayal and it can take a profound toll on the lives of support personnel who often feel powerless to aid survivors of assault (Rosenthal et al, 2017; Smith, 2017). Institutional betrayal can occur at different organizational levels, but it often has the largest impact on those employees that are directly involved with providing care to survivors of assault. As a result, university employees that interact with student survivors on a daily basis are a unique group of stakeholders that are often neglected when assessing the sexual assault environment in a particular context. This study will include these support personnel and analyze their experiences through semi-structured interviews.

This study was also strongly influenced by Sanday's study of college fraternities and the incidence of gang-rape among fraternity brothers (Sanday, 2007). Sanday performed an ethnographic analysis of sexual assault by conducting interviews with survivors of assault, fraternity brothers who defended the actions of alleged perpetrators, and faculty members involved in the processing of both survivors and perpetrators (Sanday, 2007). Sanday described the way in which survivors were systematically disenfranchised and invalidated by their assaulters, their peers, and the institutions involved in administering justice on their behalf. I use Sanday's notion of disenfranchisement in this study to describe how sexual assault survivors do not always receive justice for their cases and are often highly scrutinized by those who investigate cases of assault. The validity of survivors' claims are also often subject to a high level of criticism due to the portrayal of false accusations of assault in popular culture (Lisak et al., 2010). As such, I subscribe to the notion of survivors being invalidated by peers and institutional organizations in the aftermath of their incidence of assault (Sanday, 2007; Henrick, 2013; Lisak et al., 2010; Schwartz & Dekeseredy, 1997; Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012).

Culture is also important to understanding the decisions made by perpetrators of assault and the subsequent actions of survivors. In this analysis I employ Shultz & Lavenda's description of cultural logic to explain those practices that are used to justify cultural practices (Lavenda & Schultz, 2018). Culture is a highly regulated, patterned, and reiterative process that is taught and enforced. It is rich with meaning and encodes particular values that are inherent within a particular society (Lavenda & Schultz, 2018). In the context of this study, culture will be used as a vehicle for examining our perceptions of sexual assault survivors and the behavior of perpetrators. In referring to cultural logic, however, I do not mean a singular entity but rather a collection of multiple different cultural logics. The problematic behaviors described in the context of this study

will be made with regard to specific cultural and gendered logics that can cause harm to others, but this is not to say that all members of a particular culture or gender subscribe to these frameworks. Culture was chosen as an explanation for sexual violence, instead of biology, because the biological argument relies on faulty premises. As per the biological argument, heterosexual sexual assault occurs because of fundamental differences between males and females that cause males to be more aggressive, act on primitive drives, and become unable to control themselves due to excess testosterone (Sanday, 2007). In this study, I hope to show that these claims do not represent biological differences, but rather are a product of harmful gendered logics. The logic that is used to support these cultural beliefs, though they may result in instances of intimate partner violence, will be questioned and described in an effort to bring awareness to problematic practices that legitimize sexual assault in particular contexts.

Previous studies have identified alcohol and drug consumption as primary risk factors for sexual assault (Krebs et al., 2007; Sanday, 2007; Sheridan & Evans, 2019). The role of these risk factors will be examined in the context of risk-taking behaviors among college students, with special emphasis given to behaviors related to sexual intercourse. Relationships between perpetrators and survivors of assault will also be considered in detail, implicating a possible point of intervention for sexual assault task forces and educational initiatives (Krebs et al., 2007; Henrick, 2013; Schwartz & Dekeseredy, 1997). I subscribe to Gramsci's description of power and hegemony, which in the case of sexual assault is related to the intricate power relationships that define the recovery process for assault survivors (Gramsci, 2011). I will argue that survivors who seek help for their assault are put into unequal relationships of power and authority, leading to potentially adverse outcomes or a second assault. Foucault's notion of power-knowledge also influenced this study, particularly with respect to the ways in which university administrators

perceive students and the ways in which students perceive university institutions (Foucault, 1978). Careful discussion using these concepts will serve to explain the relationship between those with authority and those who are governed by it, in an attempt to advocate for institutional change that will help support sexual assault survivors and improve student rhetoric toward university institutions.

2.0 Methodology

The study employed a two-phased approach to holistically assess the sexual assault environment at the University of Pittsburgh. Both phases of the study were approved by the IRB under specific criteria, which will be described further below. These guidelines directly affected the types of questions I was able to ask and the manner in which I was able to ask them. As a result, there are limitations to this study's research design and its applicability. These limitations will be discussed later on, but as a disclaimer, the methodology employed in this study and the results obtained from it apply to a specific sexual assault environment and university population.

The first phase was a survey modeled after the United States Department of Justice's national collegiate sexual assault survey conducted in 2007 (Krebs et al., 2007). This survey sought to assess the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses and risk factors that predispose particular individuals to assault. To that end, a wide variety of variables were tested to determine correlations with assault, including fraternity and sorority membership, drug and alcohol consumption, and relationship to the perpetrator. The survey employed in this study used similar questions to determine the prevalence of sexual assault at the University of Pittsburgh and potential risk factors for assault. The survey was distributed online through the Qualtrics Survey System and was completely anonymous. Survey participants were recruited through in-class presentations, social media posts, messages on online course pages, and through e-mail messages with club officers, faculty, and students. The survey was distributed to students at the University of Pittsburgh and was assumed to generate a random sample that is representative of the entire student body.

Once an individual accessed the survey link, the online screening process began. In order to be eligible for the study, participants had to voluntarily consent to participate, be students at the University of Pittsburgh, and be at least 18 years old. This screening was completed through a series of three initial questions that also contained information concerning the extent of the study and a disclaimer regarding anonymity. If a participant did not provide consent, indicated that they were younger than 18 years of age, or stated that they did not attend the University of Pittsburgh, the participant was deemed ineligible and the survey automatically ended. After passing the eligibility requirements, participants could access the remaining survey questions that ranged from basic demographic information to personal experiences with sexual assault and opinions of university resources for survivors. All questions were completely optional and none of them involved providing any identifying information. Since not all individuals who participated in the survey were sexual assault survivors, two different survey paths were used during data collection. If a participant indicated that they had experienced sexual assault, they were asked further questions about their experience before being asked about university resources. If a participant indicated that they had not experienced sexual assault, they bypassed this section and were asked if they knew anyone who experienced sexual assault before being directed to their opinions of university resources. A full copy of the survey and its two paths can be found in the appendix.

The second phase of the study involved conducting interviews with sexual assault survivors and university personnel involved in providing support to survivors. This phase was inspired by the work of anthropologists and ethnographers who had performed similar analyses into the experience of sexual assault (Sanday, 2007; Mulla, 2014; Henrick, 2013; Mellins et al., 2017; Wiersma-Mosley & Jozkowski, n.d.; Schwartz & Dekeseredy, 1997). In particular, Sanday's interviews with sexual assault survivors at a major northeastern university showed me how those

who had firsthand experience with assault were best equipped to describe the various aspects of the phenomenon, as well as how their entire lives can be shaped and altered by a single event (Sanday, 2007). Sanday's ethnography also involved interviews with fraternity members and college students who had not experienced assault, in order to present a more holistic view of the campus culture surrounding sexual assault (Sanday, 2007). This project differed in scope from Sanday's, however, as it focused on survivors' experiences with accessing university resources for assault and evaluated alternative risk factors for assault outside of fraternity culture. Mulla's work with survivors of rape in hospital emergency rooms also included semi-structured interviews with those who were willing to discuss their experiences with institutions designed to pursue justice on their behalf (Mulla, 2014). The interviews conducted in this study were designed with both of these frameworks in mind. The desired outcome of this approach was to gain firsthand insight into the lives of survivors, in order to better contextualize quantitative findings from the survey and explain patterns of data through individual narratives.

Interviews with survivors of sexual assault were semi-structured and completely voluntary. All passages used from interviews are completely anonymous and pseudonyms will be used throughout when referring to specific individuals. Participants were recruited through social media posts and through a club on campus that works extensively with assault survivors in the community. Since interviews were voluntary, individuals who contacted me were briefly screened before becoming eligible to participate in the study. All interview participants had to be at least 18 years old and experienced sexual assault in college, as well as be at least six months removed from the date of incidence. This measure was implemented by the IRB to protect survivors who had recently experienced assault from reliving a traumatic experience prior to having closure or

accessing appropriate support resources. As a result, the interview participants in this study sample are a bit distant from their assault and have had time to process their experience.

Once screening was completed, interview participants were asked to select a location for the interview and they were invited to bring another individual or friend if they so desired for support. My only request was that the interview location be a private space where the interviewee felt comfortable to talk about their personal experience. Other studies have adopted similar frameworks, in order to allow the respondent to feel at ease and relaxed when discussing particularly sensitive issues (Sanday, 2007; Mulla, 2014). As such, survivor interviews were conducted in several different spaces, including empty classrooms and private sections of academic buildings with no foot traffic. I began the interviews by briefly introducing myself and the purpose of this work, which was to ultimately help other survivors and improve university practices. I encouraged survivors to tell their story in as few or as many words as they deemed necessary and to include their perceptions of university resources and support personnel.

The interview itself consisted of a series of open-ended questions that allowed respondents to express their narratives freely in as many words as they deemed necessary. This was done in order to elicit a holistic description of the experience of sexual assault, while still allowing participants to retain control of the narrative and how their story is ultimately told. Bertrand, in his discussion of anthropological research methods, describes the utility of semi-structured interviews and mixed research methodologies in eliciting greater depth of response from interviewees (Russell, 2018). Anthropologists have successfully implemented these methods globally in tandem with participant observation to develop an emic perspective of a particular group or culture, which was also a primary goal of this analysis (Russell, 2018). Based on participant responses, I would also ask follow-up questions to help clarify a remark or claim. Since the interview phase of the

study began after survey data collection, participants were also asked questions pertaining to specific trends in the data. A full list of the structured questions used during the interview can be found in the appendix, along with a few sample follow-up questions and survey questions, which varied from participant to participant.

Interviews conducted with university personnel were also semi-structured and voluntary. Passages referring to university personnel will use the title of the office or organization they belong to, instead of a pseudonym. Participants were recruited directly through e-mail messages, based on involvement with sexual assault on campus. I began by reaching out to the university's Title IX office and Pitt Police. During these interviews, participants directed me toward other groups on campus that provide support to sexual assault survivors, including the Counseling Center. This "snowballing" procedure helped me interact with additional members of the sexual assault community and better understand their unique perspectives on pertinent issues (Russell, 2018). There were no special screening procedures for these interviews and I strived to speak with anyone who had direct contact with assault survivors from an administrative or advisory standpoint. As such, interviewing Title IX officials and Pitt Police served to gain further insight into the investigative and judicial processes that follow a reported case of sexual assault. Information pertaining to current policies, historical trends in assault reports, and procedures related to handling an assault survivor were discussed thoroughly and will be presented in this study.

The purpose of these interviews was to communicate directly with administrative officials and determine both the strengths and limitations of the university's current ability to provide support to sexual assault survivors. Prior to beginning this study, I had spoken with survivors casually about their thoughts toward administration. These individuals expressed that a clear disconnect existed between administrative perceptions of the problem and student attitudes toward

institutions designed to protect and support them. By interviewing individuals from both sides of the disconnect, I hoped to further investigate the relationship between these groups and compare their differing perspectives. Studies have demonstrated that sexual assault prevention programs and university institutions can have a strong impact on the plight of survivors in both positive and negative ways (Breitenbecher, 2005; Henrick, 2013). By presenting administrative personnel with survey data and survivor narratives, I sought to bridge the gap between those with authority and those without in the hopes of improving the current standard of care provided to survivors. A full list of the structured questions used during interviews can be found in the appendix.

3.0 Results

3.1 Survey

Over the course of six months, 168 students at the University of Pittsburgh accessed the online survey through the Qualtrics Survey System. Of these responses, 130 were fully complete, meaning that one of the survey paths was followed in its entirety. Since survey questions were optional, all 168 students' responses were recorded and included in analysis. The respondents possessed varied demographic characteristics, which have been summarized below in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Participant Demographic Data

Mean Age (in years)	19.83 ± 2.01
Academic Year	26% First Year, 25% Sophomore, 16% Junior, 32% Senior, 1% Non-Traditional
Gender Identity	73% Female, 22% Male, 5% Non-Binary
Race/Ethnicity	80% White, 4% Black or African-American, 12% Asian, 4% Other
Sexual Orientation	77% Heterosexual, 3% Lesbian/Gay, 15% Bisexual, 5% Other
Mean Average Family Income	\$80,000-\$89,999 ± \$29,000

Demographic results indicated that the study population included a rather diverse group of students within a moderately large sample size. The demographic data collected in this study was nearly identical to University of Pittsburgh data on undergraduate students based on information

provided at time of admission (University of Pittsburgh, 2019). Based on these findings, it was assumed that a random distribution was achieved. All analyses conducted throughout the study are also assumed to be representative of the general student body at the University of Pittsburgh.

Group membership in particular extracurricular organizations has been linked with increased incidence of sexual assault in several studies and ethnographies (Krebs et al., 2007; Sanday, 2007; Mellins et al., 2017; Wiersma-Mosely & Jozkowski, n.d.; Sherdian & Evans, 2019). My survey specifically assessed membership in sororities or fraternities, Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), and sports teams in relation to the incidence of sexual violence. The results of this analysis are displayed below in Table 2.

Table 2: Social & Extracurricular Group Membership Data

Sports Team Membership	5% Varsity, 5% Intramural, 38% Club 52% Not a member
Fraternity Membership	8% Yes 92% No
Sorority Membership	7% Yes 93% No
ROTC Membership	1% Yes 99% No

Since the available data for ROTC membership was small relative to the sample size, no further analysis will be made on this group. However, relationships between participation in fraternity/sorority activities or sports teams and risk factors for sexual assault will be analyzed in greater detail. As a caveat, I do not claim that the reported percentages of fraternity, sorority, and sports team memberships represent university demographics, as there is limited data on the subject

to make such a claim. Nonetheless, these relationships are important to the discussion of sexual assault, as several authors have documented a link between participation in these organizations and instances of sexual violence on college campuses (Sanday, 2007; Mellins et al., 2017; Wiersma-Mosely & Jozkowski, n.d.; Sherdian & Evans, 2019; Abbey, 2002).

Alcohol and drug consumption were identified as primary risk factors for sexual assault in the literature (Krebs et al., 2007; Mellins et al., 2017; Wiersma-Mosely & Jozkowski, n.d.; Sherdian & Evans, 2019). As a result, the impact of foreign substances in relation to sexual assault was evaluated through several survey questions, especially with regard to college parties hosted by fraternities. In particular, respondents were asked to describe their typical monthly alcohol and drug consumption behaviors. Findings from this analysis are displayed in Table 3. An underlying assumption of the data presented below is that illicit substances and alcohol are available and readily consumed by some number of party attendees. I do not claim that all individuals who attend parties partake in the consumption of alcoholic beverages or illicit drugs. Instead, I wish to present the party environment as a space where the consumption of foreign substances, both legal and illegal, is permissible and normalized (Mellins et al., 2017; Wiersma-Mosely & Jozkowski, n.d.; Sherdian & Evans, 2019).

Table 3: Average Monthly Alcohol & Drug Consumption Behaviors

	Never	1-2 Times	3-5 Times	>5 Times
Attend Fraternity Party	92 (60.13%)	34 (22.22%)	15 (9.80%)	13 (7.84%)
Attend Party Where Alcohol Was Served	31 (20.13%)	61 (39.61%)	35 (22.73%)	27 (17.53%)
Visit Bar/Pub/Club	78 (50.98%)	31 (20.26%)	25 (16.34%)	20 (12.42%)
Alcoholic Beverage Consumption Frequency	23 (14.47%)	37 (24.34 %)	37 (24.34%)	57 (36.84%)
Marijuana Usage Frequency	89 (57.89%)	27 (17.76%)	11 (7.24%)	27 (17.11%)

Other Drug Usage Frequency (N = 29)	7 (24.14%)	16 (55.17%)	2 (6.90%)	4 (13.79%)
Consume Drink From Someone Unknown	122 (79.22%)	21 (13.64%)	4 (2.60%)	7 (4.55%)
Finish Drink That Was Left Unattended	122 (79.22%)	21 (13.64%)	5 (3.25%)	6 (3.90%)

From the results in Table 3, the consumption of alcohol and drugs and attending parties are commonplace occurrences among college students. Surprisingly, however, despite early education through the university against consuming drinks left unattended and accepting drinks from strangers, nearly 20% of survey respondents reported having done so in a typical month. A total of 29 respondents also reported using illicit or prescription drugs other than marijuana, of which the most common were Adderall (11), cocaine (9), and LSD (7). These findings demonstrate that college students have a certain propensity for risk-taking that can potentially compromise their judgment skills and place at risk for harm.

The survey found that risky behaviors among respondents were not limited to the consumption of foreign substances, but also extended to sexual practices. Table 4 presents an interesting dichotomy between dating partners and sexual partners, which perhaps best illustrates the general attitude of college students toward sex.

Table 4: Frequency of College Dating Relationships & Sexual Relationships

	None	1-2	3-4	5-7	8-10	11 or more
Number of Dating Partners	55 (35.71%)	78 (50.65%)	18 (11.69%)	3 (1.95%)	0	0
Number of Sexual Partners	46 (29.87%)	58 (37.66%)	18 (11.69%)	13 (8.44%)	6 (3.90%)	13 (8.44%)

No student reported having more than 7 dating partners since entering college, but 19 respondents reported having more than 7 sexual partners. These data are indicative of a larger cultural sentiment within the sexual assault environment at the university, in that individuals need

not be in committed relationships in order to have sex. As such, the data presented in Table 4 aligns well with the notion that contemporary dating culture places greater emphasis on the frequency of “hookups” rather than on long-term dating. In this context, “hookups” are defined as sexual encounters that typically occur spontaneously between individuals who are not romantic partners. As such, the term elicits similar sentiment to the colloquial “one-night stand”, but hookups can also occur over an extended period of time and at regular intervals. Stinson, Garcia, Paul et al, and Bogle have documented this shift in sexual behavior toward hookups among college students as being related to a change in cultural values that prioritizes frequency of sexual encounters over quality of encounters, by which I mean sustained relationships with a single partner (Stinson, 2010; Garcia et al., 2012; Paul et al., 2000; Bogle, 2007). The prevalence of social media and dating applications, such as Tinder, have further increased the ability of students to engage in casual, anonymous sex (Garcia et al., 2012; Paul et al., 2000; Shapiro et al., 2017). This behavior has not only become normalized, but legitimized by students who continue to engage in hookup culture and reinforce these perceptions of what constitutes normal sexual practice.

Based on Tables 3 and 4, one could conclude that students engage in risky behaviors with respect to sexual encounters and consumption of foreign substances. However, college students often combine both of these behaviors, lending to the demarcation of drugs and alcohol as primary risk factors for sexual assault (Mellins et al., 2017; Wiersma-Mosely & Jozkowski, n.d.; Sherdian & Evans, 2019). Figures 1 and 2 depict this relationship over the course of an average month and demonstrate that risk-taking does not always occur in isolation. The complex nature of this relationship as it pertains to the incidence of sexual assault will be further examined in the next section.

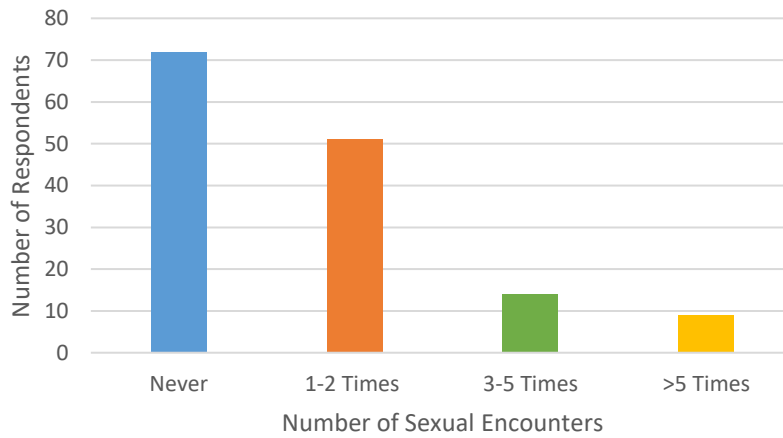


Figure 1: Average Monthly Frequency of Sexual Encounters After Consuming Drugs/Alcohol

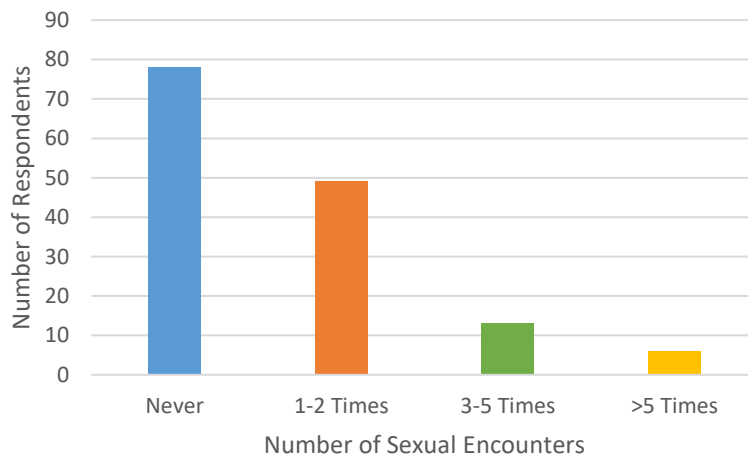


Figure 2: Average Monthly Frequency of Sexual Encounters While High/Drunk

From the data presented in Figures 1 and 2, nearly 50% of respondents have sex while under the influence of drugs and alcohol. This level of heightened risk-taking also provides insight into what students consider socially acceptable practice. Since such a large proportion of the sample engages in sexual activity of this type, it is reasonable to assume that students consider this form of sex to be ethically permissible despite deficits in judgment and decision-making

capabilities. This finding is particularly interesting when put in the context of date-rape drugs. Though I do not claim that the results document a correlation between drug consumption and prevalence of sexual assault, the normalization associated with combining drugs, alcohol, and sex might potentially increase the risk of date-rape drugs going unnoticed. However, ethnographers have demonstrated that alcohol can be used in similar ways as a tool to coax women into having sex (Sanday, 2007). The methods employed by men who intentionally attempt to get women drunk enough to have sex are also often coercive and result in a similar state of impaired judgment. Therefore, though a relatively large group of college students appears to engage in sex regularly while under the effects of alcohol or drugs, this behavior is still problematic and could result in instances of sexual violence.

Now, we turn our attention to acts of sexual violence and the frequency of behaviors that could lead to assault. Until now, the analysis of survey data has assumed heteronormative accounts of sexual violence, in order to compare data with literature that makes the same assumption. However, there were no means of identifying if a male or a female was sexually assaulted during the survey as a means of protecting potentially identifying information. The IRB requested that these variables not be connected given the highly sensitive nature of the project. Therefore, the data presented in Table 5 pertains to students in general of all gender backgrounds and forms of sexuality.

Table 5: Frequency of Malicious Acts of Sexual Aggression & Violence

	Yes	No
Suspected That You Received a Drug Without Consent (N=145)	17 (11.72%)	128 (88.28%)
Threatened or Humiliated By Dating Partner (N=145)	36 (24.83%)	109 (75.17%)
Physically Hurt By Dating Partner (N=145)	17 (11.72%)	128 (88.28%)
Experienced Sexual Assault (N=143)	38 (26.57%)	105 (73.43%)
Know a Sexual Assault Survivor (N=144)	118 (81.94%)	26 (18.06%)

Results showed that 26.57% of survey respondents experienced sexual assault since entering college at the University of Pittsburgh, while over 80% of the study population knew a sexual assault survivor. These results portray a higher sexual assault incidence rate than both the national average reported by the Department of Justice and the University of Pittsburgh's data from 2015 (Krebs et al., 2007; Cantor et al., 2015). The sample analyzed in this study could be potentially biased due to recruitment through organizations that provide support to sexual assault survivors, but it could also be indicative of the true amount of survivors on campus as sexual assault is known to be an underreported crime (Henrick, 2013; Buchholz, 2015). It is also interesting to note that a large majority of respondents are aware of the presence of sexual assault survivors on campus, yet sexual violence continues to persist at a rather alarming rate.

The 38 individuals who indicated that they had experienced sexual assault were then asked specific questions pertaining to their individual experience (Survey Path 1). Figures 3 and 4 below display data pertaining to the prevalence of different forms of assault and the number of assailants involved in the incident.

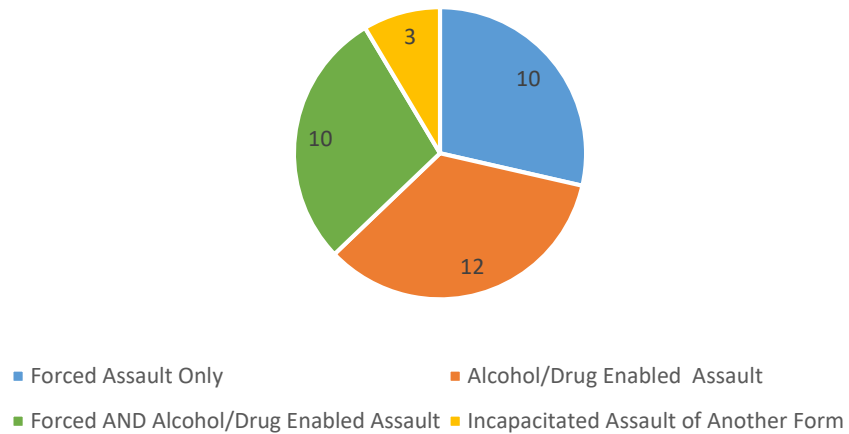


Figure 3: Frequency of Types of Sexual Assault (N=35)

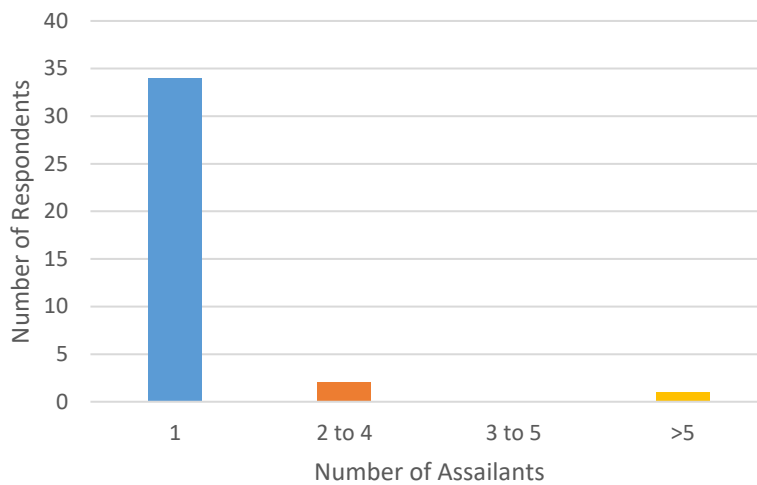


Figure 4: Number of Perpetrators Involved in Sexual Assault (N=37)

Over 90% of survivors reported that a single perpetrator was involved in the incident of assault, which supports previous experimental data (Krebs et al., 2007; Cantor et al., 2015). The intimate nature of sexual violence is revealed through this statistic, which suggests the reality faced by most college assault survivors. Gang-rape with multiple assailants was also reported in Figure 4, but at a much lower frequency than cases of single-perpetrator assault. Nearly 65% of participants who experienced sexual assault also reported the presence of drugs and alcohol as mediating factors

that contributed to the incident of assault. This analysis is further explored in terms of survivor substance use and perpetrator substance use in Figures 5 and 6.

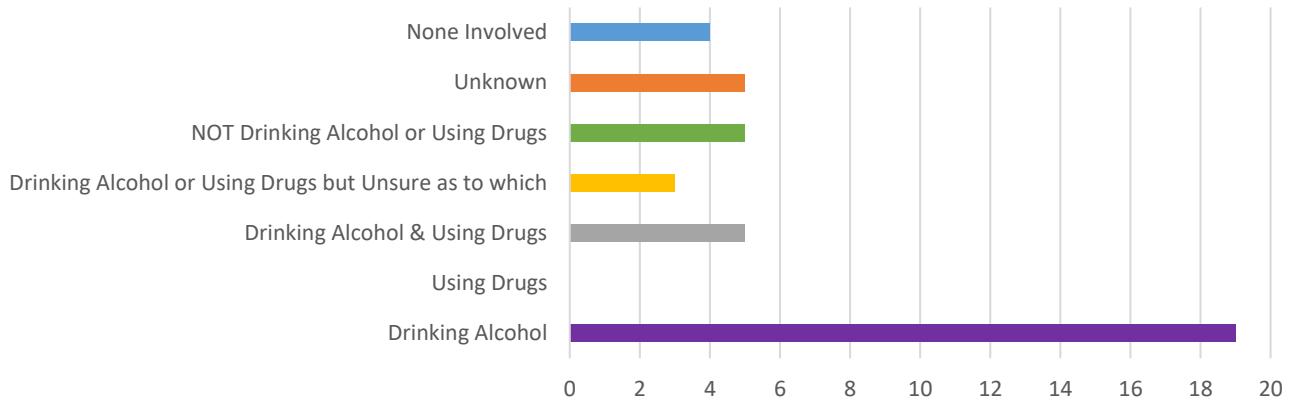


Figure 5: Perpetrator Substance Use Prior to the Assault

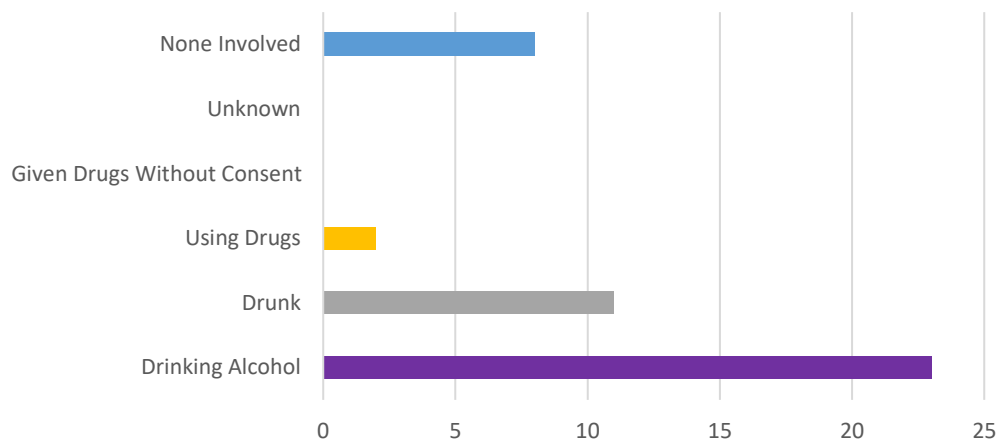


Figure 6: Survivor Substance Use Prior to the Assault

Over 62% of survivors indicated that the perpetrator was known to have consumed alcohol or suspected to have consumed alcohol at the time of assault. Similarly, over 75% of survivors had consumed alcohol or were drunk at the time of assault. This data supports the current literature that identifies alcohol consumption as a primary risk factor for assault (Mellins et al., 2017; Wiersma-Mosely & Jozkowski, n.d.; Sherdian & Evans, 2019). Drug use also appears to have a correlational relationship with sexual assault, though survivors reported drug use in lower

frequency than alcohol consumption. The incapacitating effects of substances cause the issue of consent to become increasingly complex and blurring the lines of where sexual activity is permitted and where it is not. Also, 4% of survivors indicated that the perpetrator was not affected by drugs or alcohol at the time of the assault. In contrast, over 18% of survivors indicated that they were not affected by drugs or alcohol at the time of their assault. This trend alludes to the fact that a complex array of other variables is also at play in cases of sexual violence among college students. Though educational programs and media reports tend to focus on excessive risk-taking behaviors, the incidence of assault among individuals who are not affected by foreign substances suggests that interventional plans must also be directed elsewhere (Sanday, 2007; Cantor et al., 2015; Mellins et al., 2017; Wiersma-Mosely & Jozkowski, n.d.; Sherdian & Evans, 2019).

One such external variable that was studied during this study was the nature of the relationship between perpetrators and survivors of assault. The age-old narrative that assault occurs between strangers has transformed in recent years into an account of a more intimate act of violence between friends, acquaintances, and lovers (Krebs et al., 2007; Abbey, 2002). Figures 7-10 display data pertaining to this hypothesis and provide additional perpetrator characteristics as reported by sexual assault survivors.

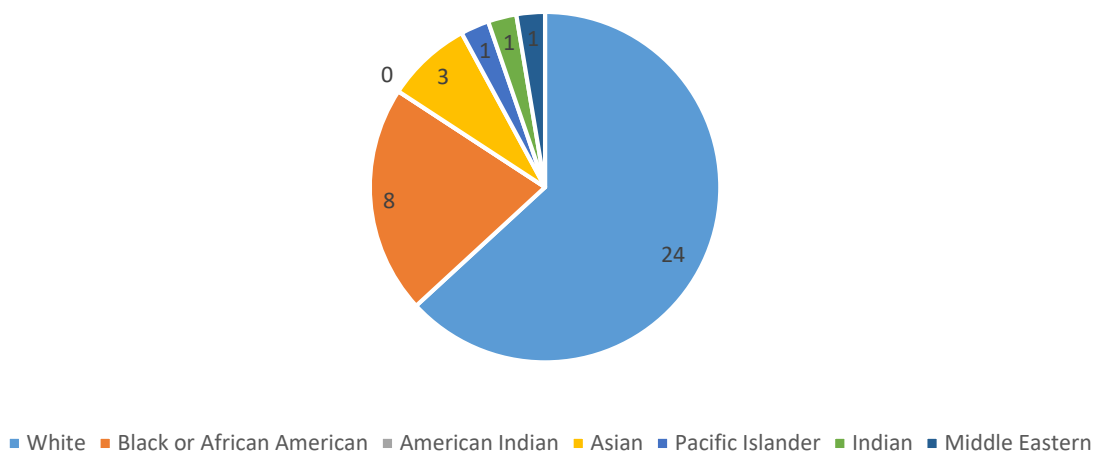
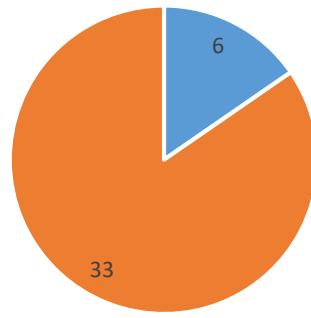


Figure 7: Race/Ethnicity of Perpetrator (N=38)



■ Yes ■ No

Figure 8: Sexual Assault Occurred During Date with Perpetrator (N=39)

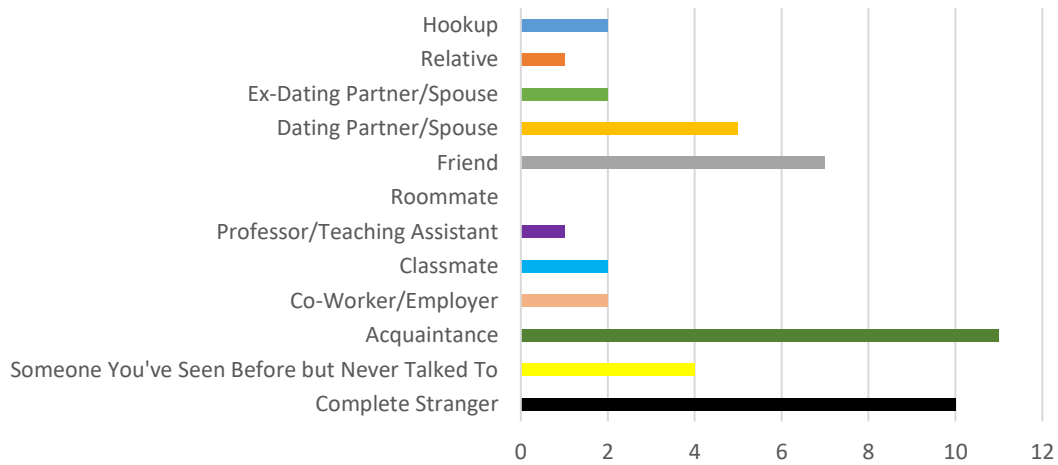


Figure 9: Relationship of Perpetrator to Assault Survivor

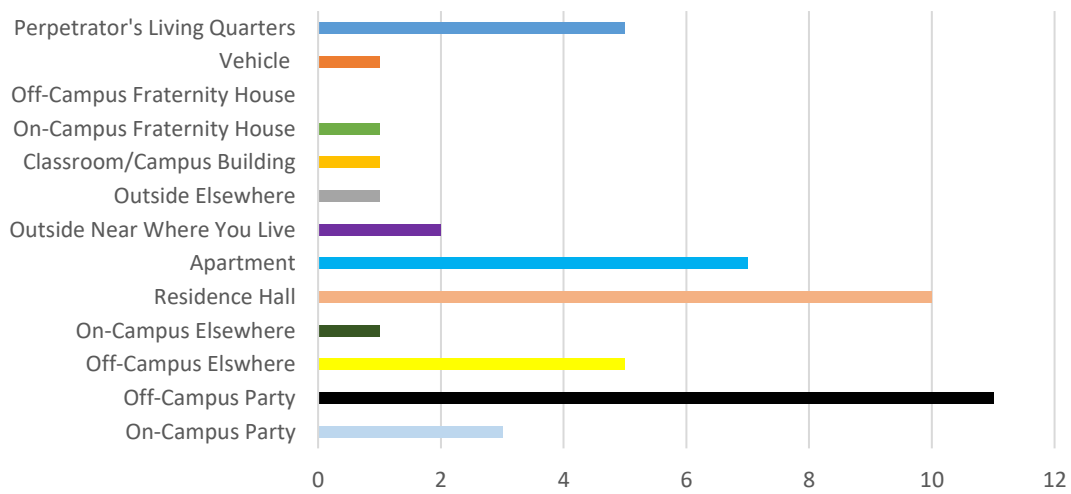


Figure 10: Location of Sexual Assault

The most common perpetrator ethnicity was White, with over 63% of survivors labeling their assaulter as such. Does this finding imply that individuals belonging to this ethnic background are more likely to commit sexual assault than individuals of other backgrounds? In the context of the University of Pittsburgh, I do not believe this to be the case as the school has a large percentage of White students. However, we will return to this topic in the next section when discussing the lack of diversity in institutions and organizations that offer support to assault survivors.

Data from Figure 9 portrays that 79.17% (35) of survivors had some relationship with their perpetrator prior to the incidence of assault. These relationships are important risk factors that encode special meanings. For instance, in the case of professors (1), employers (2), or relatives (1) committing assault, relationships of power and perceived authority become important in making survivors feel victimized or vulnerable in particular situations. Friends and acquaintances (18) fall in a similar category, as these individuals were likely trusted by survivors before the incident of assault violated this relationship. Intimate partner violence also appears to be a concerning problem among college students with 14.59% (7) of survivors reporting assault from a past or current lover. This complicates the casual sex phenomenon described earlier, as dating relationships are fewer in frequency than sexual relationships, indicating that assault both within committed relationships and outside of them are problematic within this demographic. Just over 20% (10) of assaults occurred between complete strangers, indicating that this danger has not completely been eliminated though there are increasingly frequent reports of sexual violence between individuals who know one another (Krebs et al., 2007; Abbey 2002). Further analysis of these relationships will occur in the next section through the lens of assault survivors' stories and the perspective of university support institutions.

The highest frequency of assaults occurred in party settings followed closely by apartments and residence halls. These results again point to the role of college students' risk-taking behavior and the consumption of alcohol and drugs in contributing to incidence of sexual assault. However, the consumption of alcohol and drugs is strictly forbidden in residence halls at the University of Pittsburgh (University of Pittsburgh, 2019). It would be naïve to assume that this precludes students from partaking in these behaviors, yet it does raise the question of the university's responsibility toward survivors who are assaulted in university buildings. Perhaps, stricter monitoring by resident assistants and open-door policies are necessary to prevent incidence of assault from occurring, though these measures would restrict individual privacy. Most university residence halls are also double occupancy or larger, meaning that in order for an individual to have sex, at least one or more roommates must be displaced. Do these roommates, then, have any responsibility toward preventing assault from occurring within their shared living spaces if they are aware of the situation? Bystander awareness programs, including the one at the University of Pittsburgh, have attempted to target interventions at this level and at the level of partygoers (Breitenbecher, 2005; University of Pittsburgh, 2019). Despite these efforts, the data suggests that sexual assault continues to occur with relatively high frequency across both university buildings and private domiciles within close proximity of other individuals.

Survivors experience sexual assault in different ways and can seek varied forms of support through peers, family members, and university sponsored support organizations. Tables 6 through 8 and Figure 11 depict some of the different kinds of behaviors survivors exhibit following their assault and the frequency with which they occurred.

Table 6: Summary of Post-Assault Support Seeking Behavior

	Yes	No
Disclosed Assault to Family Member (N=38)	10 (26.32%)	28 (73.68%)
Disclosed Assault to Friends (N=38)	32 (84.21%)	6 (15.79%)
Disclosed Incident to Other Group (N=35)	7 (20.00%)	28 (80.00%)
Contacted Crisis Center (N=38)	6 (15.79%)	32 (84.21%)
Contacted University of Pittsburgh Crisis Center (N=6)	3 (50.00%)	3 (50.00%)
Sought Psychological Counseling (N=33)	15 (45.45%)	18 (54.55%)
Sought Psychological Counseling Through the University (N=15)	5 (33.33%)	10 (66.67%)

Table 7: Frequency of Survivor Interaction with Investigative Institutions or the Legal System

	Yes	No	Unknown
Took Sexual Assault Examination (N=38)	5 (13.16%)	33 (86.84%)	N/A
Visited Hospital or Emergency Room (N=38)	4 (10.53%)	34 (89.47%)	N/A
Reported Incident to Law Enforcement (N=38)	1 (2.63%)	(97.37%)	N/A
Perpetrator Received University Disciplinary Action (N=35)	1 (2.86%)	32 (91.43%)	2 (5.71%)

Perpetrator Prosecuted by Criminal Justice System (N=34)	2 (5.88%)	32 (94.12%)	0
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Table 8: Impact of Assault on Survivors' Personal Lives

	Yes	No
Assault Affected Academics (N=36)	16 (44.44%)	20 (55.56%)
Moved From Current Residence (N=36)	8 (22.22%)	28 (77.78%)
Quit Job (N=36)	3 (8.33%)	33 (91.67%)

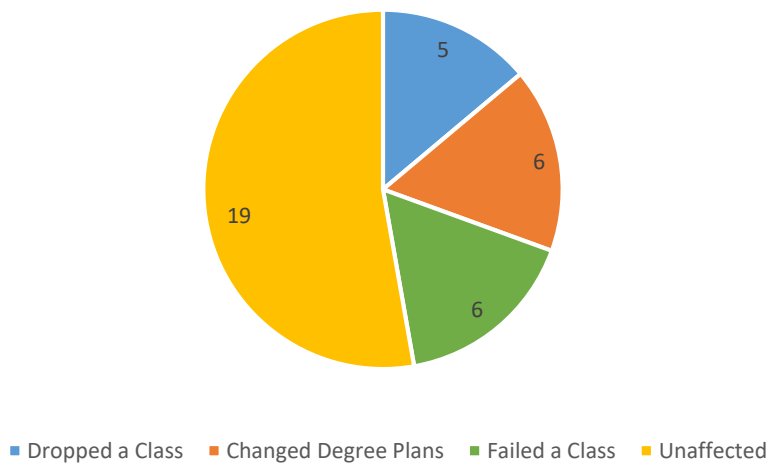


Figure 11: Effect of Assault on Academic Performance

Survey data indicate that sexual assault at the university is underreported, with only a single recorded instance of a case being filed. The survivor who indicated that they reported the perpetrator filed cases through both the criminal justice system and the University of Pittsburgh. Furthermore, only a single perpetrator received disciplinary action through the university, while only two perpetrators were processed by the criminal justice system. It is also interesting to note that only a few survivors sought out a sexual assault examination or visited a hospital following

their assault. While there could be a plethora of reasons behind these decisions, it appears survivors do not feel comfortable disclosing their experience with law enforcement professionals or those involved in investigative procedures. This could be due to a fear of punishment or denial that an assault occurred but could also be an active attempt to avoid a “second rape”, during which survivors must subject themselves to difficult, physically invasive investigative procedures (Mulla, 2014). Survivors may also be disproportionately scrutinizing or blaming themselves for their predicament, precluding external interventions from taking place.

The results in Table 6 show that survivors reported their assault to their friends at a significantly higher rate than to family members. This reflects that survivors appear to be more comfortable disclosing a highly traumatic incident to a group of individuals in close proximity who may be better equipped to identify with their predicament. I argue this, because a survivor’s friends may know the perpetrator, be familiar with the surroundings wherein the assault took place or have been present at the time of assault themselves. This draws from the work of Orchowski and Gidycz, who reported that women were most comfortable disclosing assault experiences with friends who could provide them with the most social support (Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012). These friends could have attended the same social events or parties alongside the assault survivor, enabling them to provide the most support to a friend who experienced assault in a mutually understood environment. As such, friend groups could be an important target group for interventions aimed at providing support to survivors. For example, by making students aware of means of providing support to those in crisis or encouraging students to help those who have been affected by assault to report their incidents, a higher percentage of sexual assault cases can be reported and processed (Buchholz, 2010). Assault survivors also reported changes in occupational status, housing status, and academics. The most profound of these changes occurred academically,

with nearly half of respondents reporting altered degree plans, failed classes, and dropped classes. Assault has been shown to reduce students' academic performance, which indicates another area of intervention where survivors can be provided with support and the tools necessary to maintain and attain to their future professional goals (Krebs et al., 2007). Students also reached out to university support services and organizations following their experience with assault, which will be examined in greater detail in the context of the interviews.

As discussed previously, a large percentage of survey respondents reported that they knew a survivor of assault despite not being survivors of assault themselves. These individuals were asked questions concerning the assault of their friends or acquaintances (Survey Path 2). The results of this analysis are depicted below in Table 9.

Table 9: Survivor Experiences Following Assault as Reported By Friends and Acquaintances

	Yes	No	Unknown
Survivor Sought Out Help (<i>N</i> =66)	30 (45.45%)	36 (54.55%)	N/A
Survivor Visited a Hospital (<i>N</i> =66)	11 (16.67%)	55 (83.33%)	N/A
Survivor Went to Therapy or Counseling (<i>N</i> =66)	31 (46.97%)	35 (53.03%)	N/A
Survivor or Friend Reported Assault (<i>N</i> =63)	17 (26.98%)	46 (73.02%)	N/A
Perpetrator Received Disciplinary Action (<i>N</i> =16)	2 (12.50%)	11 (68.75%)	3 (18.75%)

The results of this analysis also demonstrated that survivors tended not to participate in investigative procedures, though many individuals reported seeking help in other ways. Nearly 27% of these incidents were also reported, which is a step up from the previous case, but still

indicates that almost 75% of sexual assault go unreported altogether. However, the most important data from this series of questions are the results of the final question in the sequence.

The final question was a fill-in style question where participants could enter a brief text response to summarize the outcome of the case. Several students used this space to demonstrate their distrust of university resources and institutions that are meant to protect survivors from undue harm. One respondent wrote that the survivor chose not to move forward with her case, because “she knew the University would do nothing”. Another pointed blame toward the decision-making process by stating that “[The] dean didn’t do anything about my friend’s assault even though there was evidence”. These responses alone are not enough to claim that the decision-making process is actually flawed, but they are important determinants of the sexual assault environment. Students appear to share a common sentiment toward university institutions, labeling them as ineffective, apathetic, and unresponsive to the needs of survivors. This presents a very real and pressing concern, as the sources of support installed to help survivors cope with their trauma could be construed as causing additional harm to those who have lost faith in the system altogether. If cases are being overturned despite substantial evidence and the rhetoric of frustration and dissatisfaction spreads throughout campus, then the efficacy of university organizations ought to be called into question and measures should be taken to reform the system entirely. However, it is too soon to make these claims without careful evaluation and also unjust to disregard the process by which assault cases are processed. In the interview section, we will return to these claims and further assess both the student and administrative perspectives on these issues. For a general summary of these issues, consider Figures 12 through 16 below.

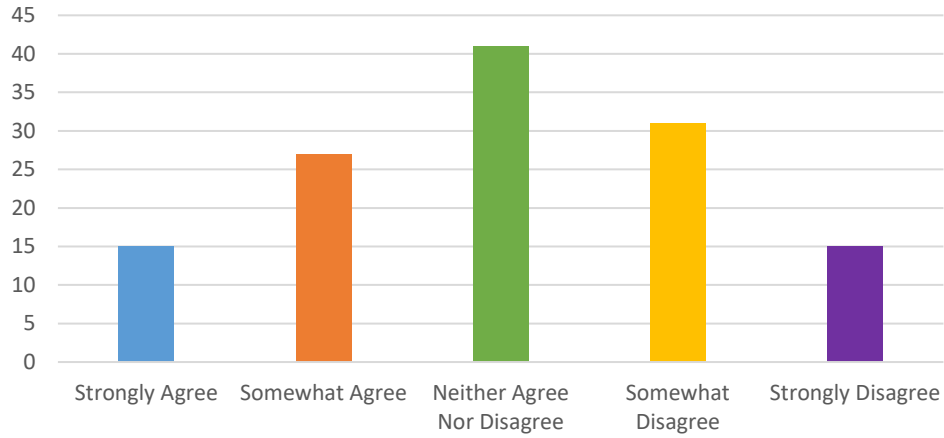


Figure 12: Agreement with Statement: "Programs, developed by the University of Pittsburgh, aimed at preventing sexual assault deter perpetrators from committing assault."

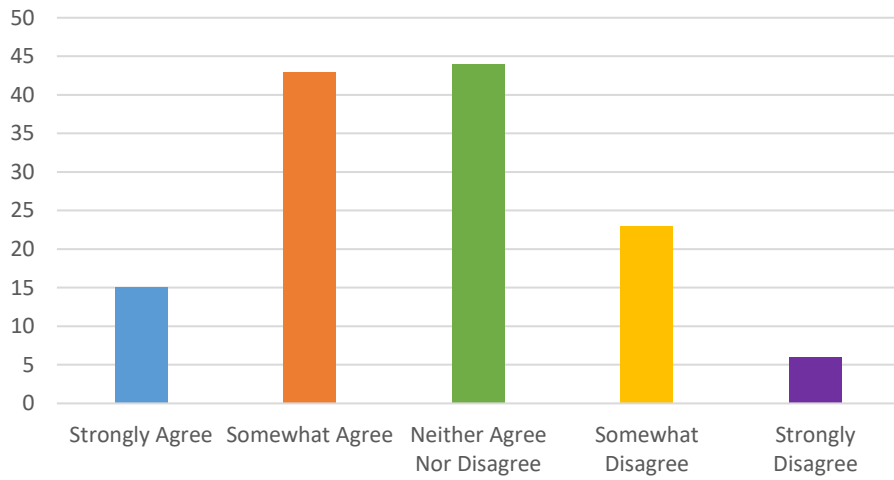


Figure 13: Agreement with Statement: "The University of Pittsburgh does an adequate job of preventing sexual assault on campus."

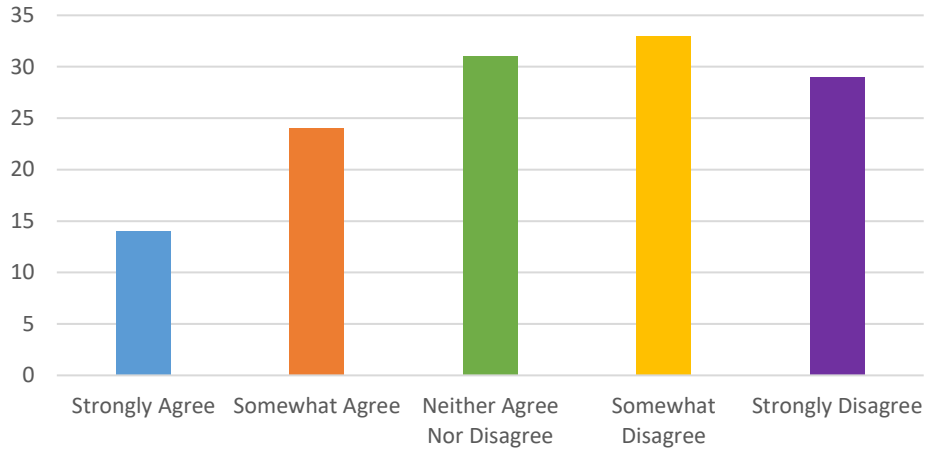


Figure 14: Agreement with Statement: "Programs, developed by the University of Pittsburgh, aimed at preventing sexual assault deter perpetrators from committing assault."

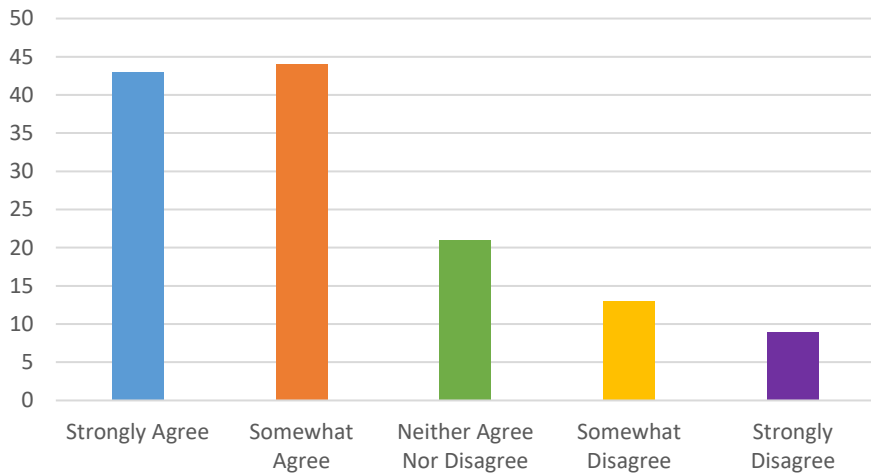


Figure 15: Agreement with Statement: "There are adequate resources provided by the University of Pittsburgh for victims of psychological/emotional distress."

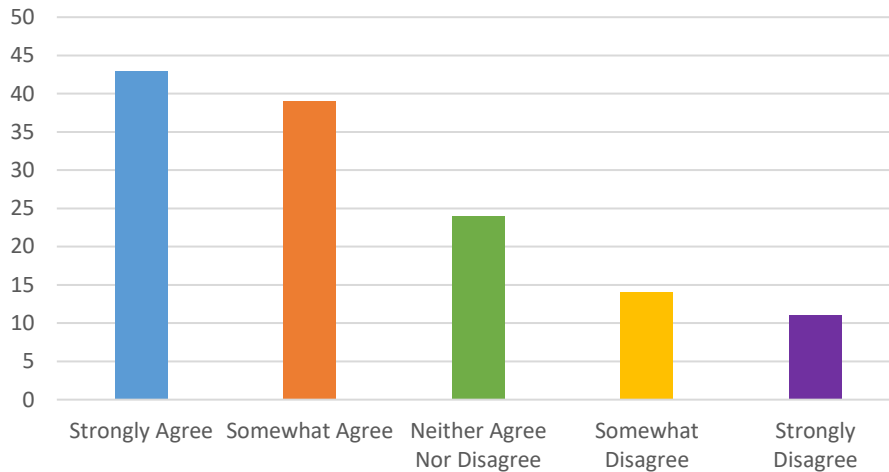


Figure 16: Agreement with Statement: "If you or someone you knew experienced assault, or any other form of distress, you would utilize/recommend University of Pittsburgh resources for counseling and support."

These student opinions of university resources and prevention methods are particularly interesting when juxtaposed against the analysis of survivor opinions discussed previously. Data from this section shows that students believe the university does an adequate job of preventing sexual assault on campus, though the programs utilized by the university received a more neutral overall opinion. Students also believe that the university provides a good amount of resources for survivors following their assault and many individuals would recommend counseling or support services sponsored by the university. At the same time, most participants believe that there is not enough threat of disciplinary action in order to deter sexual assault from occurring altogether. As such, students generally seem to agree that the university has an appropriate level of resources to help assault survivors cope with their trauma, yet do not focus enough on preventing the incident from occurring. Assault survivors, however, reported that the university resources for assault were not often sought out and there were clear flaws within the system that prevented them from receiving the justice they felt they deserved. Thus, the data reveals another disconnect between

survivors of assault and members of the general student population. This disconnect is an important distinction to make, because it separates survivors' opinions from individuals who have not experienced assault themselves. This is not to say that one opinion is superior to the other, but that it is difficult for these groups to understand one another when the body of experience that is contested is not shared by both groups. Therein lies a present need to make students aware of survivor experiences and narratives, in order to improve outcomes for all members of the university community.

3.2 Interviews

In order to address some of the concerns described in the previous section, I conducted interviews with survivors of assault and individuals involved with university support resources. These interviews were conducted after the survey was distributed and were meant to explain quantitative trends through qualitative reasoning. Participants were asked questions pertaining to some of the data trends described above in order to better contextualize these findings using survivor narratives or institutional perspectives. As discussed previously, the initial phases of this study revealed multiple degrees of disconnect between students, survivors, and administrative personnel. By presenting narratives from different perspectives in this section, I hope to share the experience of survivors with those who have not experienced sexual assault. In the same way, the perspectives and experiences of those involved in providing support for survivors will be presented to help both students and administrators facilitate collaborative discourse that can improve conditions for all members of the university community. Though there are limitations to this form of knowledge, which will be discussed at the end of the section, these narratives provide direct

insight into the lives of those involved in the sexual assault community, including the limitations administrators face in providing support and the difficulties survivors face when seeking help.

3.2.1 Diana's Story: At the Intersection of Race, Powerlessness, and Assault

I begin with a conversation with a student whom I will refer to as Diana. Diana experienced sexual assault in her senior year of high school and again in her first year of college. She is also a student of color who believes that her ethnic heritage is an important part of her being, which has affected the way she processed her experience of assault. On the day we met for the interview, we sat in a hallway corridor of a campus building, away from the study rooms and public areas for students. Though we had briefly talked on the phone prior to meeting in person, the experience felt almost surreal. She was the first survivor that had expressed interest in my research and volunteered to share her narrative with me, though she had no obligation to do so. At this point, I had already conducted my first interviews with administrative personnel, but this interview felt different. I worried about asking the wrong questions or pushing her too far on a particular topic. As I set up my recording equipment and journal, I explained the purpose of my research to her again and asked if she had any questions I could answer. Then, I proceeded to place a small packet of tissues on a side table, which my mentor suggested I bring along with me just in case. Surprisingly, or perhaps unsurprisingly, no one ever needed to use that packet of tissues and it still remains unopened on my desk to this day.

Now, let us turn our attention to Diana's account of her first experience with assault, particularly with respect to the distinctions she makes concerning the importance of race in the aftermath of her experience with assault.

“My story is very multilayered... I think my story it starts off with me being very young in my eyes—I was 17 when it first happened to me. It was my senior year in high school... When it happened to me, I was going to a predominantly White institution. I think a lot of the administration and people that work in this field are White and that’s really impacted me in ways... A lot of therapists that work in this field are White and I think that was really hard for me to process, because a lot of my experience is very entangled with my culture, my ethnic culture, and the way my family reacted to it and the way I view myself because of it, because of all the shame that comes with it and it’s very much engrained with that. And to talk to someone who doesn’t look like you and potentially isn’t well-versed in the issues is really hard, because it wasn’t just for me the assault. For me, it didn’t fall within the typical narrative that you get in the “campus clarity” when you first get to college. It was somebody I was best friends with for one and a half years and that was a lot, because pretty much everyone that’s done that to me are people I’ve known... When it first happened, I felt like I was the only person of my ethnic origin that experienced it just because our voices aren’t represented...”

Diana’s experience with support institutions available to her at the time of her assault is thought-provoking. She later reported having a similar experience at the University of Pittsburgh where counselors, therapists, and institutional personnel did not look like her. In her opinion, the support systems available to students work best for “heterosexual White people”, while excluding individuals of other backgrounds from gaining reprieve. In one account of her experience with university counselors, Diana expressed frustration at the counselor who simply stated “Oh, I don’t know how to write that down” when she attempted to describe the culturally specific forms of toxic masculinity that her assaulter exhibited towards her. For Diana, it was as simple as night and day, having experienced similar forms of masculinity amongst her relatives. However, sitting across the table from someone who did not seem to be equipped with the cultural training to understand her predicament, Diana felt marginalized by her assault and experienced a form of structural violence that is purported in institutions that lack diverse personnel. When referring to structural violence, I specifically mean the systematic ways in which social institutions cause harm or damage to particular individuals often via subtle or hidden means (Burtle, n.d.). In Diana’s case, she experienced harm, because the institutions designed to protect her could not cater to her needs as a student of color from a different racial background. Diana went on to describe how the

solutions her therapists and counselors offered her may have helped cis-gendered, White survivors, but were not practical given her cultural upbringing. Consider the passage below, where Diana expresses another instance where a support professional was unable to understand how the proposed solution was not practically viable.

“I couldn’t express the idea of me not being able to go to a specific religious area, because he was there or be part of a culture. Because they would say “Oh just get a no contact order and you’ll be fine. And you’ll just be in the same space as him but you can’t talk.” But that’s really hard. I can’t express that I couldn’t join this dance team, because he was on it or I can’t join club X—and you could tell them that, but they say “Oh there’s other things sweetie” type thing. But it’s very tied to my cultural involvement and I’ve definitely had huge complications with my ethnic identity...”

The intersection of race and sexual assault is complex with respect to both the perpetration of assault and the ways in which survivors are treated following the incident. Several studies have demonstrated that African-American women are blamed more often than White women for their experience of sexual assault and receive less support from social institutions (LaFree, 1980; McNair et al., 1996; Holzman, 1996; Neville & Pugh, 1997). When utilizing counseling and therapy services, women of color report a similar sentiment as Diana in that the care provided is not culturally-competent (Holzman, 1996). This experience is also related to the lower frequency with which women of color disclose or report their experiences of assault, as they perceive the structural inequalities in place that prevent them from obtaining the appropriate help (Donovan & Williams, 2002). These inequalities go back to the antebellum era of slavery where individuals of color were consistently dehumanized, sexually violated, and made to be submissive (Neville & Pugh, 1997; Donovan & Williams, 2002). This harmful logic still permeates our society, causing women of color to not only experience sexual assault, but be blamed for the act and discredited, as well. Diana’s account serves to provide additional credence to this narrative, as a woman of

color. As such, her experience of structural inequality is heavily intertwined with her perceived racial identity and covert racism (Neville & Pugh, 1997; Donovan & Williams, 2002).

Diana's interactions with Title IX and the university Counseling Center also reflect a certain helplessness that she describes as a "clear power dynamic". Diana was unsure whether or not she wanted to report the assault she experienced her first year in college to Title IX, because her assaulter was a part of her social group. She feared that her friends would not believe her or worse, turn against her and take his side instead. Diana was also worried that if she reported the incident, the perpetrator would not receive any sort of punishment, because he was well-connected within the university community. As such, she initially visited Title IX to get resources for assault survivors, but did not have an especially positive visit. She remarks on how the process was initially confusing and tumultuous, before she found the "right person" who was willing to sit down with her and walk her through all her available options. She also had a similar experience with the Counseling Center, where she explained the issues she had been dealing with to a therapist who was assigned to her through the university. After explaining her concerns and stating that she merely wished to make "a plan for her safety", her therapist urged her to check herself into Western Psychiatric Institute¹ and seek additional help. Diana felt attacked by this claim and was angry that someone attempted to force her to check into a psychiatric facility. She felt as if she did not need

¹UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital:

https://www.upmc.com/locations/hospitals/western-psychiatric?utm_source=vanity-url&utm_medium=offline.

that level of care and those assigned to help her ought to have been more receptive to such concerns.

Diana did identify herself as someone that deals with mental illness, particularly anxiety and depression, which have been affected in part due to her experience with assault. She also relayed to me how many others on campus go through similar experiences and that the university should play a larger role in meeting the needs of these individuals, without relegating them to a more severe psychiatric treatment facility. Diana's experiences demonstrate a form of resistance and agency that survivors may implement to avoid a "second assault". Following an experience of assault, survivors often deal with bouts of mental illness or emotional turmoil.¹ The most commonly described instances of this distress include periods of depression, isolation from social groups and family, and self-blaming thoughts (Krebs et al., 2007; Sanday, 2007; Mulla, 2014; Breitenbecher, 2005; Mellins et al., 2017; Wiersma-Mosley & Jozkowski, n.d). However, actively resisting extensive psychiatric treatment and rejecting the labels others impart to her are part of Diana's experience of coping with assault. Diana believes she can get through the assault with the help of some additional guidance and firmly desires to retain control over her own body. She does not wish to subject herself to additional scrutiny or enter into a state where she feels powerless, as she did during her assaults.

When I asked Diana if she had any additional critiques of the university's support organizations or ways to improve them, she brought up the same administrator that a previous survey respondent had mentioned: the Dean of Students. Diana has accompanied other assault survivors and victims of trauma to Title IX since her own assault, making her familiar with the investigative processes conducted by Title IX. As per the Student Handbook and an interview with the current director of Title IX, if a student reports an incident of sexual assault, Title IX will

conduct an investigative process to make a recommendation concerning appropriate sanctions for the accused (University of Pittsburgh, 2019). These recommendations are then passed on to the appropriate dean of the college or department that the individuals involved in the investigative process belong to for a final verdict (University of Pittsburgh, 2019). In the case of undergraduate students, final decisions are made by the Dean of Students. Diana takes issue with this singular decision-making process and believes it leaves room for bias. In the passage below, she questions his authority to make these decisions and presents a major problem that she believes occurs relatively frequently.

“I don’t really know [the] Dean’s qualifications and that within itself, is a problem. There’s no transparency about anything. And then, he’s solely making decisions, but what gives him the authority to do so? Why is he not working with people in this field, jointly making decisions? And that’s confusing to me, because we’re entrusting this to him and I get that he’s Dean of Students, but what qualifications does he have to handle this? It’s not like he talks with the people or was in the room when the investigation was going on... And I know Title IX is going to say we don’t overturn a lot—Title IX gives good recommendations, but what I’ve seen is the first one is kind of like poop. It doesn’t do anything, but then if you appeal, they usually do something from what I’ve seen with other people. And that is hard, because you don’t want to have to go through that again.”

Diana’s claim presents a new power dichotomy between Title IX and the Dean. Though Diana’s personal experience with Title IX was not the best, she believes that as an institution, they do work positively to provide proper recommendations for survivors. However, she views the Dean as the individual with the most power in this situation, who overturns decisions despite substantial evidence or appropriate recommendations from Title IX. A survey response elicited this same sentiment, where a respondent revealed how helpless they felt believing in a flawed system of protection. Diana’s account also reemphasizes how going through the investigative process multiple times through appeals constitutes a “second assault” that could be just as bad as the initial incident of sexual assault itself. Though I have not presented substantial evidence to claim that Diana’s account is true, it is an important representation of how survivors in the

university community cope with their reality and where they see need for improvement, transparency, or reform. At the same time, however, the Dean may fully agree with Diana's account and beliefs, but the system in place to administer justice may be limited in ways beyond control by design. This would also prevent meaningful action from being taken even if the Dean agreed with Diana's account and wanted to help her pursue justice for her case. As a result, the Dean of Students and other stakeholders involved in providing support to individuals like Diana may experience forms of institutional betrayal in their roles (Rosenthal et al, 2017; Smith, 2017). In the next section, we will explore the administrative perspective in greater detail to elucidate where and why student perspectives differ from administrative perceptions.

3.2.2 Title IX's Perspective: Procedures for Supporting Assault Survivors & Limitations

Diana's account piqued my curiosity for a myriad of different reasons. At the time, I had already spoken with the director of Title IX and her account of university proceedings differed in some aspects from Diana's. This led me to return to my notes and compare my findings with what Diana had just shared with me. The Title IX director's office is located on Fifth Avenue, in a sizable office building down the street from the heart of campus. The Title IX office itself was rather small and felt rather cluttered with shelves and cabinets filled with hundreds of files pertaining to students and faculty. In a narrow hallway off to the side of the room was the Title IX Director's private office. Here I met with Katie Pope, the Director of the University of Pittsburgh's Title IX Office. Ms. Pope aspires to increase the overall quantity of reports of sexual assault so that fewer cases go unreported annually. When I asked her about the procedures that Title IX follows when conducting a sexual assault investigation, Ms. Pope carefully explained what happens from the minute a student walks in the door.

“When someone comes in and reports that they have experienced sexual assault, the typical protocol we have is, we have a case manager. And people initially meet with the case manager to discuss any immediate needs they may have: safety concerns, access to counseling and health services, police intervention if that’s what they want to have happen, housing changes, class/academic accommodations... So the person who comes in has to decide if they want to move forward with an investigation or not. They may choose not to. And there are very few cases where we can ignore that and move the case forward on our own. So it’s really up to the complainant, the person who’s been affected, to determine if they want to move forward with a university based investigation. And sometimes that happens within 2 or 3 meetings of first coming in the office. Sometimes its six or seven months after they first come into the office that they decide they want to move forward...Once they decide they want to move forward with an investigation, they are then assigned to one of our investigators who works with them through that process.”

Once the investigative process begins, complainants are asked to provide a statement of what occurred, and the alleged perpetrator is also questioned. Witnesses are called in as necessary to verify claims made by both parties and the investigator ultimately arrives at some sort of conclusion as to whether or not university policy was violated. Once this document has been finalized and assessed for compliance by Ms. Pope, it goes to the Dean of Students who makes the final decision in student cases. Diana brought up her concerns with this single-investigator model, as she argued that it gave the Dean power that he ought not to exercise in isolation. Ms. Pope’s comments, however, suggest that the Dean does not act in isolation and instead, acts on the recommendation of multiple individuals who are trained experts in the field of sexual assault. Nonetheless, the difference in perception between students and administrators in this aspect is worth noting and may require restructuring to win back student trust.

Another issue brought up in my analysis was the general distrust that students exhibit toward university support institutions that are meant to protect them. When I asked Ms. Pope about her thoughts on the matter, she responded by describing how she has attempted to make the process more transparent to win back the confidence of the student body. To that end, representatives have made themselves available at student events and training sessions, including first year orientation, to help familiarize students with the individuals working in the office who are committed to

helping those who have been affected by assault. That being said, a recent report made known that the university only has two full-time employees working in the Title IX Office, which is lower than the 10-14 full-time employees that other universities of comparable size utilize (University of Pittsburgh, 2019). As such, no matter how passionate or dedicated those individuals are, the university appears ill-equipped to manage the present demands of the student body effectively.

When I asked Ms. Pope about some of these limitations and the steps that could be taken to bridge the gap between students and administration, she responded as follows:

“If there are students who feel that we are not doing our job, I would welcome the opportunity to talk with them and find out what the concerns are. I mean I do think sometimes concerns are from misconceptions or misunderstandings about what this office can and can't do. Sometimes they're because we've made an error and if that's the case, we want to correct it and we can't correct it if we don't know that it happened... If someone you know didn't—weren't responsive to them or didn't give them information that they needed, I mean those are things we want to know, because we want to do better. Like I said, we're trying every semester to kind of evaluate the material we give people when they first come in, because we know how overwhelmed folks are when they first come in and we want to refine so that things are clearer and instructions are more step by step. Not that everyone is always the same, but at least it gives folks more of a roadmap to kind of understand the process.”

In short, Title IX wishes to serve students to the best of their ability and hopes to engage with students who feel as if particular expectations or needs have not been fulfilled. However, it is difficult to have these conversations when students continue to describe a distrust of Title IX and take issue with the investigative process employed by this institution. The issue becomes further complicated when an individual has a bad experience with Title IX and then shares this narrative with fellow students, warning them away from resources that are meant to provide help and support. Breitenbecher and Henrick also describe how distrust among students can negatively impact the efficacy of Title IX, especially when the student perception of Title IX becomes hostile and viewed as an institution that propagates a second assault, rather than an institution of support (Breitenbecher, 2005; Henrick, 2013).

3.2.3 Jane's Account: Blurred Lines and The Inadequacy of Campus Resources

The case described above is one that resonates strongly with another survivor I met named Jane. Shortly after I started making social media posts to recruit interview participants, Jane was one of the first individuals to reach out to me. From our initial messages back and forth, it became clear that Jane, a White undergraduate student, felt her story was important and needed to be shared to help prevent others from experiencing the same plight. A few days after our conversation, we met in a campus building in the evening after classes were done. I sat across from her at a table in one of the rooms and began walking her through the consent process. After explaining my research and asking her if she had any questions before we begin, she replied, "Sounds good. Let's get moving." Jane's expression was firm and unwavering. She was a no-nonsense type of person who was motivated to get her point across to those who might benefit from her insight. Jane began by telling me about what happened the night of her incident and how she came to realize that it was an experience of sexual assault.

"I was at a party with some friends and we were, you know, drinking and all that. At the party, I met this guy who seemed really kind and genuine and sweet. He was so friendly and, I don't know if it was the drinks, but I remember thinking, 'Wow, he's so charming'. So we kept drinking and talking and I got pretty drunk. After a while, this guy started to notice and was like, 'Hey, are you okay?', and was checking on me and offered to take me home...Anyways so we got to my place eventually and I invited him in, I don't know why, I guess I was just trying to be nice... And yeah things kind of got out of hand from there. I woke up the next morning and he was leaving and I remember feeling kind of scared and really shy, cause I was naked under the sheets and didn't remember going to sleep that way. And it took me a while to realize that what had happened to me was assault, because I thought 'Oh it's my fault, I was asking for it' but it really wasn't."

Jane believes her experience with sexual assault was closely related to her substance use that night and could have been avoided had she practiced safer drinking habits. This reaction is not atypical of assault survivors, as blame is often pointed inward rather than toward male perpetrators. As a consequence, many survivors tend to be hesitant to report their assault early on, believing that

they themselves are at fault for the event that transpired (Krebs et al., 2007; Sanday, 2007; Mulla, 2014; Mellins et al., 2017; Wiersma Mosely & Jozkowski, n.d.; Buchholz, 2015; Sheridan & Evans, 2019; Abbey, 2002). The survey data reported a high incidence of college students having sex while drunk or high each month, increasing the likelihood that incidents like Jane's can occur. Jane also did not initially believe she had been assaulted and felt as if it was normal for this sort of thing to happen. Only after talking to a friend about the incident later did she realize that she had been assaulted. As such, Jane told me that "there are probably a hundred other girls just like me who think this is normal behavior when it isn't". This normalization of sexual violence reveals another faulty cultural logic, which permits these behaviors and legitimizes them as appropriate when they are actually harmful. Jane's experience also involves a specific, pervasive toxic masculinity, which I define as the hegemonic subjugation of weaker men and women by so-called "alpha males" (Creighton & Oliffe, 2010; Jenney & Exner-Cortens, 2018; Posadas, 2017). Toxic masculinity has particular importance to sexual assault, because cases of assault similar to Jane's are the byproduct of hypermasculine attitudes toward women, which when combined with contemporary hookup culture, have profound consequences on the rate of sexual violence. As such, the rhetoric and practices that support this form of hegemonic patriarchy and male privilege are problematic, but they are also constantly reinforced and reinvented through the experiences of college students and survivors of assault (Jenney & Exner-Cortens, 2018; Posadas, 2017)

In addition to the problematic behavior described above, it is also important to note that in Jane's account of assault, having sex without consent is both wrong and illegal.² Since Jane was

²Pennsylvania Age of Consent Laws 2019:

<https://www.ageofconsent.net/states/pennsylvania>.

in a mental state where she could not refuse sex and did not realize she was having sex, her experience constitutes assault and is a present reality for many students on college campuses that requires targeted intervention (Krebs et al., 2007; Sanday, 2007; Mellins et al., 2017; Wiersma Mosely & Jozkowski, n.d.).

Another interesting aspect of Jane's experience was that she described the perpetrator in generally positive terms prior to the assault. Sanday also discusses this phenomenon rather extensively in her analysis of "nice guys" who appear kind and genuine in party settings, but are deliberately using alcohol, flirtatious devices, and other schemes in their "conquest" or "hunt" of female sexual partners (Sanday, 2007). Martinez et al. describe this pattern of thought as the "good guy stereotype", which refers to typically White college-aged men who do not conform to standard notions of rapists who wear ski masks, threaten with weapons, and lunge from the darkness, but intentionally pursue female sexual partners through the same means that Sanday describes (Martinez et al., 2018). However, it can also be the case that some men are "good" and do not realize that what they are doing constitutes assault. Sanday describes how representations of sex and sexuality in the media coupled with social expectations garnered from pornography and peers can lead male perpetrators to believe that having sex with a woman who is drunk or passed out is perfectly acceptable (Sanday, 2007). The same holds for women who have sex while drunk or passed out, as even Jane describes not realizing that what had happened to her constitutes assault. Jozkowski argues that this disconnect is related to the privilege of the White male patriarchy, which affords these individuals the power to occupy socially elite positions where they can dictate and

reinforce distinctions between sex and assault (Jozkowski, n.d.). Since those in power do not view their coercive means of obtaining sexual partners as tantamount to assault and encourage males around them, particularly in fraternities, to use them, these “good guys” are actually adversely impacting and harming individuals like Jane at an alarming pace (Martinez et al., 2018; Jozkowski, n.d.).

Jane’s experiences following the assault continued to reflect her hardened personality, as she relayed to me how she did not break down or experience any sort of emotional turmoil following the incident. Instead, Jane became fixated on obtaining justice for her crime and preventing incidents like this from happening to others. Jane went to Title IX and authorized an investigation into her case. She also spoke with her peers about the incident and warned them to be safer when going out to parties, clubs, or social events. However, despite her best efforts, Jane’s Title IX investigation did not result in a verdict that held the perpetrator responsible for his actions. Jane was surprised at this outcome and expresses her frustration in the passage below.

“I was shocked really. You expect them [Title IX] to be there for you and protect you, but they just said they couldn’t do anything about it. They offered to put me in different classes or give me recommendations for therapy if anything else was bothering me, but they couldn’t do anything about my case...I mean, I don’t want to be cliché, but it’s like they didn’t believe me and that felt really unfair.”

Jane described feeling disenfranchised by the institution that was designed to preserve her best interests. A major issue among survivors, which often gets portrayed in the media, is that of individuals who refuse to validate their narratives and doubt the veracity of their claims (Lisak et al., 2010; Svrluga & Anderson, 2017). A possible explanation for this pattern of thinking could be found within the context of a specific, harmful gendered logic. Gender roles are often rigidly enforced in contemporary society from a young age by parents, caregivers, and early academic institutions. Boys and girls are taught to behave in particular ways, even if these behaviors could

be problematic and cause harm to others. For example, certain men may be taught to be hardened and stoic and become dependent on these values for their own self-image. Some women may also be taught to be more emotional and submissive in social settings, which can make them vulnerable to sexual violence. When individuals of these specific backgrounds come together, there is a potential for sexual assault due to alcohol consumption or verbal coercion. Additionally, these women may not realize that they have been assaulted or may not receive justice due to biases that permit this sort of problematic behavior, the constraints of the burden of proof in legal proceedings, or other limitations in the system that prevent committees from convicting perpetrators even when they may believe they are guilty. Now the above patterns of thought represent specific gendered logics that can form a volatile combination, but these logics are not the only ones present in our society. There are plenty of women who do not subscribe to a submissive stereotype and men who are emotional and understanding.

Returning to Jane's experience, however, a harmful combination of gendered logics was present and she did not receive justice in her case, perhaps due to one or more of the reasons outlined previously. Despite this, it is important to note that she places the blame on the institution and believes that Title IX did not believe her narrative. When I spoke with Title IX about why cases are overturned in this manner, I received the following explanation:

“And often, when we don't have a finding of responsibility, we still make a recommendation to [the] Dean of Students that there be some kind of training or education or counseling or something provided. But because there's not a finding, it can't be sanctionable, so the person can't be forced to do it since they have been found to violate policy. That happens quite often when we do departmental investigations, maybe there's no singular finding of responsibility, but we make recommendations to the dean or department chair or whatever to say there needs to be some sort of training done to improve the climate of the environment.”

Again, there appears a disconnect between administration's perception of the problem, as they argue for the explanation that despite their best intentions, they are still constrained by the

legal system and other structural elements that have little to do with the specific details of the case. The existence of these narratives in the same environment reveals the need for careful conversation in order to repair the strained relationship between students and university institutions. By presenting both of these narratives in tandem, it is my hope that these groups become aware of each others' perspective and take steps toward alleviating their mutual concerns.

3.2.4 The Role of Pitt Police: Institutions of Power and Their Impact

Aside from Title IX, other institutions are also at play during sexual assault investigations and for providing support to survivors. The Pitt Police, for example, can conduct sexual assault investigations in tandem with Title IX if a criminal case has been filed. When I first reached out to Pitt Police to get their statement on this issue, they were very kind and receptive to my work. Upon arriving, however, I felt the air was a bit tense for some reason. I was put into one of the interrogation rooms and spoke with two of the detectives, who seemed a bit uncomfortable that they were being questioned in the space where they typically held preeminence. In fact, there was an instant early on where the detectives stepped out of the room to regroup before answering my questions. In the spirit of full disclosure, I wish to disclose that I was not allowed to record this interview at the request of the detectives and thus, this section relies entirely on the notes I took during our brief conversation and the policies outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.

When an individual reports an instance of sexual assault to the Pitt Police, their response is quite similar to Title IX. The detective who arrives at the scene typically refers an advocate or representative from the local community to speak with the survivor and encourages a sexual assault

examination be performed at Magee Women's Hospital³, which is staffed with a round the clock sexual assault examiner nurse. From this point onward, the police work through the case as they would any other investigation, assuming the student provides permission to pursue a full investigation. Pitt Police also provide information to survivors, just as Title IX does, about no-contact orders through the Office of Student Affairs, which help the survivor obtain separation and privacy from the perpetrator. Non-students who commit acts of sexual violence or otherwise can also be banned from campus by the Pitt Police (University of Pittsburgh, 2019).

Over the span of approximately 30 minutes, the above information summarizes the majority of what I was able to gather from my interview with the Pitt Police. A major issue identified by the detectives was that their office was understaffed with only 8 full-time detectives. Understaffing was also an issue in the Title IX Office and will appear again in the discussion of the Counseling Center. This common theme suggests the presence of structural barriers that prevent these institutions from carrying out their services to their fullest capability, limiting their ability to cater to the needs of an entire student population as large as the University of Pittsburgh. When I asked about student perception of Pitt Police and how that can be improved, the detectives did not seem to mind much that a distrust exists between these bodies. Of the few quotes I was able to note down, one detective simply remarked, "We can't help that".

Though the information I garnered from this interview constitutes a body of evidence too small to make generalizations from, I do believe the detectives were exhibiting a form of power in their responses, akin to Foucault's discussion of power and the creation of knowledge (Foucault, 1978). It is this power I wish to explore further in the context of a survivor that reports a sexual

³ Magee Women's Hospital: <https://share.upmc.com/2017/10/seeking-treatment-after-sexual-assault/>

assault. I was placed in an interrogation room that felt uncomfortable. Though I had not committed a crime or offense, the room itself made me feel a bit nervous with its large two-way mirror and almost sound-proof quality. This room symbolizes the institution of authority that is the Pitt Police, which may make it difficult for survivors to come forward to discuss a difficult experience. The survivors are not at fault for what happened to them, but interrogating them in a room of this fashion could put them in a vulnerable situation that could be construed as a second assault.

Since I was not a survivor, however, I cannot make any definitive claims about how the organization of space in this institution affects survivors' experience with Pitt Police. Nonetheless, later in this section, I will present an example of a survivor who had a very positive experience with Pitt Police, which could serve as evidence that this institution of power has an overall positive impact on survivors. Still, it is disconcerting to hear that the detectives showed little regard for improving relationships between students and institutions of power that are meant to support and provide aid on their behalf. These sorts of attitudes from support institutions likely contributes to the distrust of institutions that survivors of assault describe, as well as the general student sentiment that university administration does nothing to help survivors. Students who identify with this description of support organizations may also feel less inclined to report their experiences of assault, or other crimes for that matter, which further serves to exacerbate existing concerns in the sexual assault community.

3.2.5 The Counseling Center: Providing support or too understaffed to make a difference?

Another institution that plays a pivotal role in providing support to survivors of sexual assault at the University of Pittsburgh is the Counseling Center. The Counseling Center is a free service offered to all students where they can speak with a professional therapist for a maximum

of eight sessions per academic term.⁴ The Counseling Center also has walk-in hours for individuals in crisis, as well as a telephone hotline number. I reached out to the center during the course of my research and Michele Welker, the coordinator of the Office of Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Education (SHARE), responded back to me with an interview date. The SHARE office provides resources for assault survivors and uses peer educators to spread awareness of safe sex practices, reporting instances of sexual violence, and taking preventative measures to avoid assault.⁵ I met with Ms. Welker in her office, where she conducts her student appointments throughout the week. Though it was a dismal, rainy day, Ms. Welker's office was warm and inviting. The room was organized with a particular sense of space in mind, as it provided a calming atmosphere to those who entered it in crisis or despair. As I sat on the couch where hundreds of students in crisis had before me, with Ms. Welker sitting directly across from me, I feel it important to state that the room felt quite comfortable and safe, as compared to the offices and interrogation rooms I had previously visited. There were comfortable couches and rugs, as well as large open windows and artwork throughout the room, giving it a warmer quality. There was more effort put into the construction of this space as a safe place for survivors and those in distress, which I believe helps build trust and bridge the gap between support institutions and students by putting them at ease.

In her role as the SHARE coordinator, Ms. Welker sees a wide variety of different individuals and cases on a day to day basis. When I asked her what usually happens when someone walks through the door, Ms. Welker described how it was important to maintain a positive

⁴ Counseling Center: <https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/cc/services/>.

⁵ SHARE Office: <https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/share/>

environment and ensure the safety of the survivor. Survivors are always offered medical care through the university's student health clinic and are given referrals to Magee Women's Hospital for sexual assault exams. These recommendations are the same as those described by the Pitt Police and Title IX, but may potentially be received in a different manner due to the space that they are discussed in that differs from the other institutional environments. She also discussed how the survivor's first disclosure of the incident is of particular importance to her, as it can shape the way survivors continue to process the assault and how it impacts them psychologically. If the first person that the incident was disclosed to reacts in a positive manner, then the survivor typically recovers sooner and seeks help earlier. When the first disclosure is received negatively, survivors may often tend to delay getting help or accessing resources that are readily available to them (Ahrens, 2006; Ahrens et al., 2007, Ahrens et al., 2009).

When asked about student distrust of support institutions and weaknesses within the Counseling Center, Ms. Welker pointed to the role of cultural dialogue in breaking down such barriers. She admits that the office is understaffed and that there are not enough resources available such that every single person can be seen, which hinders the process of meeting all students' needs. However, if messaging could be improved and students become aware that counselors truly care to work through individuals' complex issues, then this concern could be remediated. Ms. Welker also discussed current steps being taken to improve access, such as increased walk-in hours and better referrals to community practices that are affordable for students, including Western Psychiatric Institute and the Pittsburgh Action Against Rape crisis center.

Following this discussion, I asked Ms. Welker about sexual assault incidence rates. The survey showed that a relatively higher percentage of students experience sexual assault at the University of Pittsburgh than was previously thought (Cantor et al., 2015). Ms. Welker attributes

this to a cultural shift that occurred over the last four years, rather than an actual increase in the number of sexual assault cases. In the past few years, it seems more individuals are willing to talk about assault and identify themselves as survivors sooner rather than later. For example, more survivors will come in at 6 months post-incident than at 1 year or later. Now, this has had cascading issues with a large volume of individuals requesting counseling, but Ms. Welker does believe there is less stigma associated with being a survivor now than in the past. In her assessment, victim blaming also has declined over the past four years, though the literature supports no change in rates of victim blaming over the same time span (Schwark & Bohner, 2019). The one caveat to this trend is the past year's political events, as the federal administration shifted from Obama to Trump. Since this election, Ms. Welker reported a bit of a lull in the overall rate of reporting assault, which could be due to other factors, but she believes is related to current political rhetoric and the proposed legislation of Betsy DeVos that would restructure the way universities handle sexual assault. There is no data that supports this trend, however, and it also contradicts the Title IX Director's assessment that reports of sexual assault have continuously increased in the past four years.

Ms. Welker describes strengths and limitations of the university's Counseling Center, while also conveying that this institution exists to provide help and support to survivors of assault. In this regard, the Counseling Center has the highest propensity to directly provide aid to survivors who are struggling to cope with the reality of what has transpired in their lives. However, not everyone is satisfied with the Counseling Center's work and believe there are plenty of areas for improvement.

3.2.6 Selina's Story: False Hope and the Failure of Support Institutions

In a conversation with another assault survivor, whom I refer to as Selina, the limitations of the Counseling Center as an institution are strewn out in more rigorous detail. Selina was another student who reached out to me after seeing one of my social media posts in a group she was a part of. Just like Diana, Selina's narrative with sexual assault is multi-layered and involves the intersection of mental illness and incidents of multiple assault. Selina's first incident of sexual assault occurred when she was walking home alone from a party off-campus and encountered an older "gross man" who quickly drove off afterwards. Her second incident of assault was more nuanced and she attributes her persistent bouts with mental illness as primary causal agents in the events that led up to the assault.

"With the other incident, it was more of a building up kind of thing. I had known him for a little while, I thought we were friends. And I trusted him. And I feel like that kind of comes from mental illness perspective. That's like you trust these people, because you have such low self-esteem from being depressed or anxious or anything like that. And that leads you to latch onto people who do want to spend time with you, even if they're not good people. So yeah, that night I was just—I knew seeing him was going to be a bad idea, but I didn't really care. I wanted bad things to happen to me, from like a depressed/suicidal standpoint."

Selina describes a phenomenon that was also encapsulated in the survey responses, where a close friend or trusted confidant was the perpetrator of the assault. In Selina's case, her depression and anxiety prevented her from recognizing the toxic relationship she was a part of, but at the same time, the toxic masculinity expressed by her assaulter is also revealing of a harmful gendered logic similar to the one described in Jane's account. Individuals like Selina often face blame because of mental illness or particular behaviors, rather than holding perpetrators accountable for their actions (Sanday, 2007; Schwartz & Dekeseredy, 1997). These practices uphold existing patriarchal structures and continue male privilege at the detriment of women like Selina. Selina's account is also interesting, because it seems she was aware she would be assaulted or harmed in some way

by visiting her friend. This expectation that an incident would occur is shocking and again reveals the harmful gendered logic at play in this particular situation. Muehlenkamp et al. showed that depression among college aged women was correlated with increased incidents of self-harm and risk-taking behavior (Muehlenkamp et al., 2005). Selina's behavior as it pertains to putting herself at risk for assault is thus, not atypical behavior for other individuals in her same position. Therefore, this cohort constitutes a special group at heightened risk for harm, including sexual violence.

As Selina's mental health deteriorated following her assaults, she sought out university resources to help her cope with her experience. She reported the first incident to Pitt Police and felt as if the process was very efficient, streamlined, and helped her obtain a sense of closure. Overall, she described it as a "very positive experience". She did not report her second assault to Pitt Police, because it was another student who was part of her social circle and she feared retaliation from within her social circle. As she narrates her concerns, notice how she is concerned whether or not her friends believe her or worse: cause her additional harm.

"It's hard to report when you know someone, especially when you see others who are friends with them and don't know what happened. Like one of my friends still, cause I haven't told them about it, is still really close with them and I don't want to say anything cause what if it wasn't that bad? And what if they didn't believe me? What if they stayed friends with this person or outted me on social media about accusing their friend of doing something bad?"

The advent of social media and technology have allowed us to remain connected with one another though we may be on opposite sides of the planet. Recruitment for participation in this study heavily depended on social media and interfaces that allowed me to get in contact with a large, diverse audience. However, with this heightened level of freedom comes a fear of not fitting in or committing a social faux pas that would negatively impact one's profile. The advent of social media has also resulted in instances of cyber-bullying and online harassment that have increased

rates of depression, suicide, and other mental illnesses among college-aged individuals (Goebert, et al., 2010; Fletcher et al., 2014; Landstedt & Persson, 2014). Therefore, a fear of retaliation through social media platforms becomes a valid concern, as messages can be spread across a wide audience at an instant, drastically changing the lives of individuals (Fletcher et al., 2014; Landstedt & Persson, 2014). As such, it becomes difficult for survivors of assault to report their incident to peers or others close to them, especially when the perpetrator is part of their social circle (Krebs et al., 2007; Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012). Selina's narrative, therefore, is prevented from being validated and she experiences social disenfranchisement in being unable to receive validation for what has happened to her. Living her daily life in this manner further contributed to worsening mental health, due to conflicting social, individual, and behavioral pressures, which caused her to reach out to the university Counseling Center for professional help.

“I had called the Counseling Center and I did some screening questions. And I'm like, 'Great, I'm going to be in soon'. And then at the end of the call, they told me it's going to be at least 2 months before we get you in. And I'm like 'That's crazy'. And then so I was just in a bad place for two months. I tried to find external therapy, I couldn't cause it's hard to get therapy without having it already set up. Once I got in [Counseling Center], I went to an initial session with the person, they were an in-training person through the doctorate program. And they were fine, but at the end of this 90 minute session, disclosing my personal history and all that happened and that jazz. Really emotional. They're just like, 'Yeah you're too severe for us, we just can't have you.' And I think 'Okay, what do I do know?'... So I had to take another month or so, sorting out my own therapy outside of the school, which I could've been doing in those two months, but I was just waiting for the school's therapy. That was a really frustrating experience. And I really wish that-- because the school has thing where they only give you, I believe it's 8 sessions of therapy. So if it's something like you're stressed about school or anything like that, they'll help you. But a lot of people at Pitt have mental health problems and I really feel that they should take on people that are more severe, not to the point of taking them to Western Psych but you know, typical depressed people.”

Selina's experience with the Counseling Center was frustrating and again, disenfranchising. She could not get an initial appointment for two months, because the center is understaffed, and then received the double disappointment when her case was deemed too “severe”. Selina's collective narrative is marked with repeated instances of rejection and

invalidation whether it was the support she wanted to seek from her friends or from the university. Just as Diana had brought up, Selina rejected being labeled a severe case that required Western Psychiatric level intensive care and instead viewed herself as a standard, everyday mental health patient. Ultimately, Selina's mother helped her find external therapy and she is in a much better state now than she was during her time of crisis. However, Selina believes the university should not operate in this manner and ought to help survivors who are in similar positions to herself. Simply labeling her as too severe is not appropriate nor does it help her cope with her present reality. The theme of survivors desiring more from institutions that govern them is akin to the relationship between nations and their citizens. The nation-state owes certain obligations to its citizens and when those fail, citizens cry out in protest until their rights have been restored. Similarly, the ways in which survivors of assault demonstrate their dissatisfaction is through dialogue with other students, dissuading them from using university resources in lieu of alternative options. Perhaps this form of protest is done in an attempt to shift the balance of power or regain lost agency, but it once again describes a perceptual disconnect of the problem that needs to be carefully assessed.

Aside from the Counseling Center and Pitt Police, Selina did not have much other experience with other university support institutions for assault. However, Selina did have an opinion on Title IX based on an experience she had in one of her classes during her sophomore year at the University of Pittsburgh.

“When I was a sophomore there was this one teacher I had in the GSWS department. He was a really nasty guy—he didn't really respect anyone. He like regularly would not use peoples' pronouns, which was so confusing cause at the beginning of the semester he was like write down everyone's names and pronouns. I'll respect you. And he just didn't. So I expected so much better. And there was this whole academic thing going on too, where he really was not fair with grading and eventually he got reported to Title IX. He disclosed in class—we were talking about sexual assault and how sometimes people are wrongfully accused. And he was really hammering in on that, “Well that's not the issue”. And he disclosed that he was “wrongly accused” and it was this

whole situation. And it was frustrating that it took so long for Title IX to do something. Like they got him out the last day of class. And yeah it was really stressful. I had to go through the whole GSWS department to find someone to re-grade my papers and all that. He also wasn't accommodating of people with disability status... In general, I find that Title IX takes a long time or is ineffective."

Selina's experience does not pertain directly to her experience with assault, but reveals her belief that Title IX as an institution does an inadequate job of protecting students. During our conversation, she described how multiple individuals had reported this professor to Title IX over the course of the semester and yet, nothing was accomplished until the last day of the semester. I argue that these sort of experiences with university institutions contribute to the general distrust and negative sentiment students exhibit toward the university. The survey revealed that many individuals believe that Title IX and the university are ineffective and "wouldn't do anything" to help their case. Selina's account, as well as Jane's, provides yet another narrative that reiterates this belief. When juxtaposed against the account provided by Ms. Pope, Selina's account and student opinion suggest that Title IX is not fully aware of the far-reaching issues that students have with university support organizations or is unable to effectively administer justice even in cases where supposed "clear evidence" is readily available. However, what constitutes clear evidence varies based on the perspective taken, as the survivors I interviewed would likely argue for a lower burden of proof than the administrators I spoke to who are constrained by the limitations of a more rigorous investigative system. Regardless of wherein the issues lie, there is a clear and present need for dialogue between systems of authority and those who are subject to them in order to repair the damaged relationship and prevent future instances of inadequate support.

3.2.7 ‘Fetishization’ and Sexual Assault

A final aspect of Selina’s narrative that did not present itself in the context of the survey was the topic of gender and sexuality and how this relates to instances of sexual violence. She identifies as a woman in the LGBTQIA “bubble”, as she called it, which has had a profound impact on the way she conceives of sex and the power relationships it entails.

“You’re kind of conditioned as a woman to accept things, make yourself smaller. So if a guy says, ‘I want to have sex’ it doesn’t feel like your place to say no. It’s like well he wants this, so I’ll help him feel that. And with sexuality it puts you in a vulnerable place to begin with. A lot of the time men think it’s hot to have sex with a lesbian and it kind of puts you at a higher risk of meeting bad men or bad people, because you’re in this unique position.”

Diana also described a similar power dynamic that is part of sexual assault and the coping process, which she felt she experienced as a woman of color. She refers to this phenomenon as “fetishization”, which in the context refers to her experiences as a woman who has been hyper-sexualized because she is of exotic descent.

“You’re over-sexualized because you belong to a culture and for me, it’s lead to instances of abuse from White men. And it’s one of those things we don’t talk about and it’s a very clear power dynamic, but if people don’t understand that or don’t want to address it when you’re reporting, then how are you supposed to address it. Those are some of the main things that I was lacking and that’s just because in general, when we think of sexual assault, we think of heterosexual relationships, cis-gendered, White. And you’re leaving out so many populations.”

Selina and Diana describe the same phenomenon, though they experience it in different ways based on sexuality or cultural heritage. In both cases, they have felt as if other individuals have abused or attempted to abuse them based on a particular erotic fantasy or fetish they embody. Crenshaw also describes the ways in which women of color experience violence in both their daily lives and in cases of sexual assault due to structural inequalities that cause them to be dominated in myriad ways (Crenshaw, 1990). These accounts further serve to support my claim that particular cultural and gendered logics surrounding sex are fundamentally flawed, which have led to

instances of both sexual and structural violence that have been documented throughout this analysis.

3.2.8 Societal Implications and Consequences

It is clear from this analysis that male privilege and toxic masculinity are key elements in the perpetration of sexual assault, as these elements create the potential for violence against women. As discussed previously, violence against women of color in particular is strongly related to the higher status ascribed to White males, who then possess the power to shape patterns of normal sexual behavior (Foucault, 1978; Creighton & Oliffe, 2010; Jenney & Exner-Cortens, 2018; Posadas, 2017). In a society that increasingly focuses on hookups rather than dating relationships, those with the power to dictate these interactions becomes increasingly important. A shift in this narrative is required and harmful practices need to be reassessed in order to validate survivors' experiences and provide them with the support they need. However, we must also consider the implications of this shift and the consequences they would entail in order to be fully implemented. Firstly, the White male hegemonic patriarchy and male privilege would have to be done away with altogether, in order to free women from the subjugated position they often occupy within our social schemas related to sex. This would also involve ridding society of systems that support the patriarchy, including sports, marriage, and capitalism. Clearly, this task is not simple to achieve and is more likely impossible. However, recognizing the intricate ways in which these elements come to define and reinforce one another is integral to understanding patterns of sexual violence against women and facilitating dialogue to remediate it.

In summary, the interviews revealed specific logics and harmful behaviors that permeate the sexual assault environment at the University of Pittsburgh and within larger society, as a whole.

Aside from the narratives that have already been shared, I also wish to share my personal experience speaking with survivors. People often say survivors are resilient and strong, but if we measure ourselves up to them, we have no idea what the meaning of strength truly is. I believe it is important to express how calm and almost casually Diana, Jane, and Selina were able to recount the details of the trauma they experienced and to some degree, continue to battle. Despite their pain, the richness and depth of experience they exude as living witnesses of a terrible crime are unmatched by any other source I have encountered while performing this research.

3.3 Summary of Results

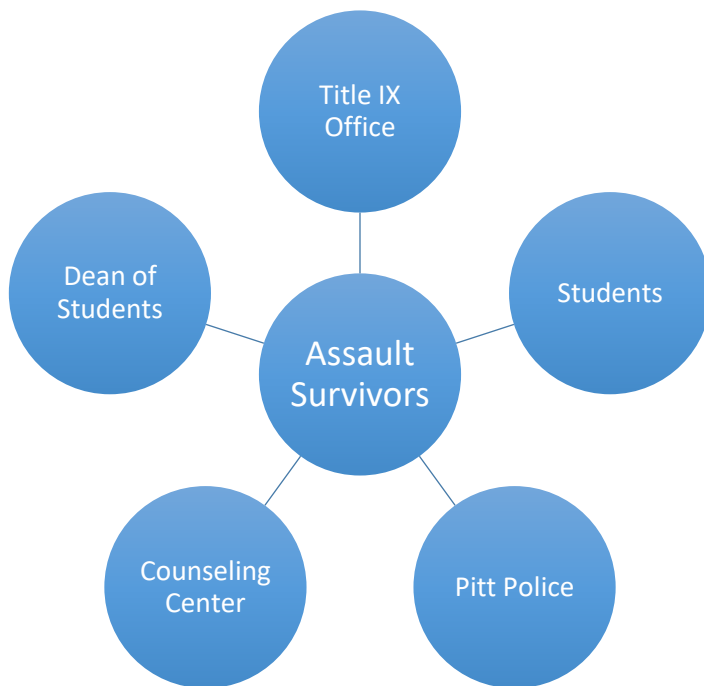


Figure 17: Web of Stakeholder Relationships in the Sexual Assault Environment

Figure 17 depicts a simplified version of the university’s sexual assault environment and several of the institutions involved with providing support to sexual assault survivors. This image is the type you might find on a pamphlet about sexual assault, but it codes a complex network of

information that every student ought to be aware of. Start by positioning yourself in the shoes of an assault survivor. The first step you likely take is speak with friends about what happened and what you ought to do. Studies have shown that this first disclosure is critical to subsequent steps, because if the assault survivor feels supported and validated, they will often pursue additional resources. If the survivor feels invalidated, then they may cease to pursue other means of support or even deny that an assault occurred altogether (Krebs et al., 2007; Mulla, 2014; Wiersma-Mosely & Jozkowski, n.d.). Now consider that the survivor is validated and chooses to pursue therapy through the Counseling Center. Unfortunately, the vast majority of survivors face an extended waiting period that can last up to 8 weeks. To make matters worse, once the survivor reaches their first appointment, they may be deemed “too severe” for university services and referred to more extensive psychiatric care or treatment.

Now what if the survivor instead chooses to pursue some form of legal recourse or sanction against the perpetrator? The next step is to visit Title IX or the Pitt Police to begin an investigation and receive other support resources to help cope with the assault experience. The Title IX process includes a case manager to walk you through the individual parts of the investigation, while the Pitt Police perform a more standard criminal investigation. These organizations will arrive at independent conclusions and present their findings accordingly. In the case of Title IX, the Dean of Students receives a recommendation and makes a final decision in the case. In contrast, the Pitt Police may place sanctions on the perpetrator that ban them from campus or prevent them from contacting the survivor. However, Pitt Police cannot do everything regular police can do, which limits their power and prevents them from carrying out sanctions as would be the case in a civil proceeding. With respect to the Dean of Students’ decision, several study respondents reported that the first case is often denied with no sanction, but if the case is appealed, some sanction may

take place against the perpetrator. Integrating these factors together, we can see that it is difficult to obtain sanctions for the perpetrator in cases of assault and that the process itself is emotionally taxing. It is for these reasons that I argue that support institutions at the University of Pittsburgh contribute to the distrust students demonstrate, with regard to their efficacy, and may cause survivors to experience a second assault.

4.0 Limitations & Future Research

As a heterosexual male conducting research in a space dominated by women, I did not always have access to every facet or space of their world. For example, there were no male survivors involved in the analysis of this study, which could be an important part of the conversation that was not included. It was difficult to recruit survivors to share their stories with me and at times, it felt as if individuals did not want me involved in this community. Justifiably, I understand their sentiment, as there was no guarantee that my work would help their situation or that they wanted my help in the first place. On more than one occasion, I received messages from women who equated me with the problem and did not want me interfering with the survivor community. My motives were questioned with some survivors asking if I was sent on behalf of the university to improve their public image or on behalf of fraternity brothers to cover up for possible wrongdoings. I also had several conversations with friends who discouraged me from conducting this research and constantly questioned my motivation for working with this community.

Though I was warned I would never be accepted in this space, I believe those who spoke with me did in fact accept me as someone who was on their side. I believe this acceptance was essential, as any good ethnographic work involves immersion within a community to gain a fuller perspective of how and why phenomena occur the way they do (Russell, 2018). During the study, there were also a few male individuals who had experienced assault and told me that they were happy that someone was willing to step forth and work in this field though it would be difficult to do so. Despite the presence of these supportive comments, no male survivors were willing to speak with me and thus, were not included in the study. As such, there are limitations to this study, such

as a small interview population and survey population. Future studies could investigate the same variables on a larger scale and with more ethnographic interviews to attain to a more holistic picture of the sexual assault environment. There were also limitations with university personnel who refused to partake in interviews. For example, I reached out to the Dean of Students on multiple occasions to obtain a statement since the role kept appearing in both the survey and my interviews. However, I never received a response and could not investigate this role further. While a more comprehensive ethnography would also require this perspective to draw rigorous conclusions, I believe the claims I make in this study are still valid and justified. It is also worth noting that Title IX and the position of Dean of Students were not formed with the intention of managing sexual assault cases. Title IX was formed to ensure equal opportunity for all individuals and sexes and to prevent discrimination based on gender. Similarly, the Dean of Students has a wide array of administrative powers, the vast majority of which, have nothing to do with sexual assault cases. Though these institutions are often perceived as bodies of punishment, they were actually forced into this role because no other institution was designed to deal solely with sexual assault. Further research is needed to evaluate these perceptions as they pertain to the sexual assault environment.

Another limitation of the study was the restrictive measures put in place by the IRB that prevented a more thorough investigation from taking place. I was not permitted to collect particular forms of identifying information, which limited the survey results and prevented statistical analyses from taking place. For example, I was not permitted to collect specific responses, such as a participant experienced sexual assault and is a lesbian, out of a concern that it could potentially identify individuals. These restrictions also initially extended to interview questions where I was originally not allowed to ask questions pertaining to a survivor's experience with sexual assault,

but ultimately received permission to do so. Further research is needed to attain to a more comprehensive assessment of the sexual assault environment, with access to correlational tools that can provide greater insight.

Another avenue of potential research is if a study of this scale was conducting as an ethnography. Though this study employed a mixed-methods approach, it was not a full ethnography. A full analysis would have also included participant observation in addition to interviews, which could entail attending parties, visiting bars, accompanying individuals to Title IX or the Counseling Center, and attending training sessions for students regarding substance use and sexual assault. From this sort of research, a more comprehensive description of the sexual assault environment can be attained that reveals additional subtle ways of experiencing power, masculinity, and privilege. New insights could be gained from relationships with friends of survivors, resident assistants, and others involved in the sexual assault environment in ways that could not be achieved in this study through interviews and surveys alone.

5.0 Recommendations for Improving Campus Policy

Sexual assault on college campuses is affected by a plethora of different risk factors and variables. At the University of Pittsburgh, sexual assault appears to occur at an elevated rate and survivors are not provided with adequate support following their incidents of assault. Risk factors pertaining to alcohol and drug consumption are an integral part of explaining patterns of sexual assault at the university, which have been discussed previously by other authors. Support organizations and institutions at the university must also be evaluated for efficacy and intervention methods need to be recalibrated to meet the present needs of the student body.

A major problem that was uncovered during the course of this analysis was the understaffing of key organizations involved in providing assault survivors with support. Though hiring of additional staff may help these shortages, the underlying structural barriers to doing so must also be taken into consideration as discussed previously. Issues pertaining to disenfranchisement and invalidation of survivors require more institutional change in order to prevent instances of structural violence from causing secondary assault. Through careful dialogue and analysis of the underlying power relationships at play in the case of student interactions with university resources, survivors can receive better post-incident care and the distrust that students express can be remediated. Remaining understaffed also helps preserve the status quo and male privilege, as it becomes nearly impossible for additional reports to be made because there are not adequate facilities to handle them. By keeping staff numbers low within support organizations, the university could be protecting itself from being known as an institution with particularly high levels of sexual assault. Remediating these institutional barriers cannot occur overnight and would

likely involve additional sociocultural consequences, as well, but by beginning the conversation, meaningful strides can be taken toward the prevention of sexual violence against college students.

Survey analysis also identified that students regularly engage in risky behaviors pertaining to the combination of alcohol, drugs, and sex. This suggests a need for better educational tools to combat patterns of behavior that can leave individuals susceptible for sexual assault. Creating spaces to discuss sexual assault openly may also contribute to improving the overall climate surrounding assault at the university. As students become aware of other narratives and surprising trends, such as the fact that most survivors report knowing their assaulters personally, future incidents of assault can be substantially reduced. This form of dialogue would also help speak to the negative rhetoric spread by students who have lost faith in university support organizations. In order to repair this damaged relationship, both parties need to improve transparency with regard to sexual assault and be willing to discuss legislative, policy, and procedural issues openly. These discussions can begin at the level of the university, including students, the Dean, Chancellor, and Board of Trustees. However, sexual assault is a nationwide collegiate dilemma and requires better public policy at the national level, as well, to combat and deter perpetrators altogether.

6.0 Looking Ahead: The #MeToo Movement, Proposed Legislation and Their Impact on the Sexual Assault Environment

Recently, Betsy DeVos proposed legislations to alter sexual assault policies at collegiate institutions. Schools would have to limit investigations to the most severe cases of sexual assault, dismiss assaults that occur off-campus, and survivors would have to be cross-examined in person by a moderator of the alleged perpetrator's choosing (Svrluga & Anderson, 2017; University of Pittsburgh, 2019). This legislation is problematic for survivors like Diana and Jane, because both of their incidents occurred at off-campus locations, yet they are very real incidents of violence that occur between students of the same university. By defining sexual assault in only the most severe cases, i.e. forced penetrative intercourse, sexual harassment would no longer be investigated or sanctioned by schools. Also, support resources for assault survivors would be reduced under the DeVos legislation along with perpetrator sanctions. Proponents of this proposed legislation point to the occurrence of false accusations of assault that derail individuals' lives when advocating for an advisor of the perpetrator's choosing to cross-examine the survivor (Lisak et al., 2010; Svrluga & Anderson, 2017; University of Pittsburgh, 2019). However, this process can also be biased against survivors and expose them to a "second assault" of a different form. In place of these measures, I argue that responding to student generated feedback and improving university resources through mutual understanding of the issues will help improve the sexual assault environment at institutions across the nation.

In addition to future changes that could impact the sexual assault landscape in the future, past events could also be explored to analyze the way in which they defined and impacted survivors' experiences. With the advent of the "#MeToo" movement and widespread public

attention brought to acts of sexual violence at universities across the nation, the way in which these events contribute to changes in university support organizations needs to be assessed. Though I was told in my interview with Title IX that university policy has not changed significantly in recent years, there have been large-scale events that ought to have warranted a restructuring of the assault landscape. In 2018, the university's communications department was found to have had a long history of widespread sexual harassment that affected dozens of women. These women were consistently devalued at the expense of preserving male privilege, which was reported to have led to change in university policy (Smith, 2018). However, these changes were not addressed in my discussion with Title IX deeming further investigation necessary.

7.0 Conclusion

Sexual assault continues to be a major public health crisis today and is not an issue that can be eradicated overnight. However, as a community we can make a concerted effort to prevent stigma and shame from invalidating survivors' stories any longer. We can shift the narrative to change our existing cultural rhetoric and mark forms of toxic masculinity as taboo. Most of all, through advocacy and structural reform, the secondary assault can be eliminated altogether and survivors' experiences of disenfranchisement can be made an object of the past.

Appendix A Survey

Campus-Wide Sexual Assault Survey & Ethnography

Principal Investigator: Christopher Babu. csb49@pitt.edu. (516) 286-4820. **Co-Investigator:** Dr. Gabby Yearwood. yearwood@pitt.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to talk to someone other than the research team, please call the University of Pittsburgh Human Subjects Protection Advocate toll-free at 866-212-2668.

Pitt Resources: University Counseling Center: Wellness Center. 412-648-7930. <https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/cc/>. Pitt General Mental Health Crisis Response: 412-648-7930. <https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/cc/crisisemergency/>.

Pitt Sexual Assault Response: 412-648-7856 Title IX Office Pitt: 412-648-7860. titleixcoordinator@pitt.edu

Community Resources: Magee Women's Hospital: Offering emergency medical care; forensic medical exam with Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner offered 24/7. For all genders. <http://www.upmc.com/locations/hospitals/magee/Pages/default.aspx>.

PAAR (Pittsburgh Action Against Rape): Offering sexual assault support, counseling and advocacy, 24-hr. hotline. 1/866-END-RAPE. <https://paar.net/>.

Persad: 1-888-873-7723 LGBTQIA+ services. <https://persadcenter.org/>.

Re:solve Crisis network: 1-888-YOU CAN (1-888-796-8226). <http://www.upmc.com/Services/behavioral-health/resolve-crisis-services/Pages/default.aspx>.

UPMC Mercy Hospital: Offering emergency medical care; forensic medical exam with Sexual

Assault Nurse Examiner offered 24/7.

<http://www.upmc.com/locations/hospitals/mercy/services/Pages/emergency.aspx>.

Victims of Crime Compensation Act of PA. [http://www.pccd.pa.gov/Victim-Services/Pages/Victims-Compensation-Assistance-Program-\(VCAP\).aspx](http://www.pccd.pa.gov/Victim-Services/Pages/Victims-Compensation-Assistance-Program-(VCAP).aspx).

Women's Center: 412-687-8005 Offering counseling, advocacy and support to those experiencing relationship violence. 24 hr hotline. <https://www.wcpspittsburgh.org/>.

Introduction: This study is being conducted to assess the incidence of sexual assault at Pitt and the efficacy of campus resources in regard to assault. The study aims to quantify risk factors for assault, as well as possible points of preventative intervention. The individual experiences of survivors of assault are essential to this study. To be eligible to participate, you must be a University of Pittsburgh student and at least 18 years of age. The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Research Activities: ·

Survey: The survey will ask you questions about your demographics, past experience with sexual assault, and experiences with campus resources for assault. You may choose to skip any questions you do not wish to answer and all answers will remain completely anonymous. **No identifying information** will be collected during this portion of the study.

Study Risks: Undue stress due to a prior traumatic experience or sadness constitute infrequent risks of this study. A potential breach of confidentiality, in regard to survey responses, also constitutes an infrequent risk.

Study Benefits: There are **no** direct benefits of participating in this study for the participant.

Privacy & Confidentiality: All data will be stored securely on an external storage device. The hard drive will be encrypted and password protected. Information pertaining to each individual

will be kept in separate, locked files. **No identifiers** will be collected during the survey, nor will any IP addresses be recorded during data collection. These measures are put in place to ensure anonymity of data. Data will **not** be accessed by any third party groups. As per University of Pittsburgh policy, all research records must be maintained for at least 7 years following final reporting of the study.

Withdrawal from Study Participation: You can, at any time, withdraw from this research study. Simply exit the survey or press the return key to leave the page. You can also choose to skip any questions you do not wish to answer and progress forward with the rest of the survey. Your decision to withdraw from this study will have no effect on your current or future relationship with the University of Pittsburgh.

Payments: There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. If there are any words you do not understand, feel free to contact us. The investigators will be available to answer your current and future questions. Whether or not you provide your consent for participation in this research study will have no effect on your current or future relationship with the University of Pittsburgh.

Right to Withdraw: Participants may be withdrawn from study participation if they experience undue stress or negative consequences as a result of recalling painful memories pertaining to assault.

Consent to Participate: The above information has been explained to me and all of my current questions have been answered. I understand that I am encouraged to ask questions, voice concerns or complaints about any aspect of this research study during the course of this study, and that such future questions, concerns or complaints will be answered by a qualified individual or by the

investigators listed on the first page of this consent document at the telephone number or e-mails given.

I understand that I may always request that my questions, concerns or complaints be addressed by a listed investigator. I understand that I may contact the Human Subjects Protection Advocate of the IRB Office, University of Pittsburgh (1-866-212-2668) to discuss problems, concerns, and questions; obtain information; offer input; or discuss situations that occurred during my participation. By selecting “I agree to participate in this research study” at the bottom of this page, I am providing my consent to take the survey and participate in the study.

I agree to participate in this research study (1)

I do NOT agree to participate in this study (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Campus-Wide Sexual Assault Survey & Ethnography Principal Investigator: Christopher Babu. csb49@p... = I do NOT agree to participate in this study

End of Block: Consent Form

Start of Block: Disclaimer/Resources

Disclaimer: All responses to this survey are OPTIONAL. Though your answers will remain anonymous, if any questions make you uncomfortable or you wish to leave anything blank, you may do so. Additionally, if you have not experienced sexual assault, you can still participate in

this survey. Once you indicate this on question 35, the survey will automatically take you to the next section. A list of campus resources for victims of assault can be found below:

Pitt Resources: University Counseling Center: Wellness Center. 412-648-7930.
<https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/cc/>.

Pitt General Mental Health Crisis Response: 412-648-7930.
<https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/cc/crisisemergency/>.

Pitt Sexual Assault Response: 412-648-7856

Title IX Office Pitt: 412-648-7860. titleixcoordinator@pitt.edu

Community Resources: Magee Women's Hospital: Offering emergency medical care; forensic medical exam with Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner offered 24/7. For all genders.
<http://www.upmc.com/locations/hospitals/magee/Pages/default.aspx>.

PAAR (Pittsburgh Action Against Rape): Offering sexual assault support, counseling and advocacy, 24-hr. hotline. 1/866-END-RAPE. <https://paar.net/>.

Persad: 1-888-873-7723 LGBTQIA+ services. <https://persadcenter.org/>.

Re:solve Crisis network: 1-888-YOU CAN (1-888-796-8226).
<http://www.upmc.com/Services/behavioral-health/resolve-crisis-services/Pages/default.aspx>.

UPMC Mercy Hospital: Offering emergency medical care; forensic medical exam with Sexual

Assault Nurse Examiner offered 24/7.

<http://www.upmc.com/locations/hospitals/mercy/services/Pages/emergency.aspx>.

Victims of Crime Compensation Act of PA. [http://www.pccd.pa.gov/Victim-Services/Pages/Victims-Compensation-Assistance-Program-\(VCAP\).aspx](http://www.pccd.pa.gov/Victim-Services/Pages/Victims-Compensation-Assistance-Program-(VCAP).aspx).

Women's Center: 412-687-8005 Offering counseling, advocacy and support to those experiencing relationship violence. 24 hr hotline. <https://www.wcpittsburgh.org/>.

End of Block: Disclaimer/Resources

Start of Block: Screening

Q76 Please indicate your age (in years):

▼ Below 18 (1) ... 31 or older (15)

Skip To: End of Survey If Please indicate your age (in years): = Below 18

Q77 Do you attend the University of Pittsburgh?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Do you attend the University of Pittsburgh? = No

End of Block: Screening

Start of Block: Demographic Information

Q1 Race/Ethnicity (You may select more than one)

White (1)

Black or African American (2)

American Indian or Alaska Native (3)

Asian (4)

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)

Native American or American Indian (6)

Hispanic (8)

Other (Please specify): (7) _____

Q4 Sexual Orientation (You may select more than one)

Heterosexual (1)

Lesbian (2)

Gay (3)

Bisexual (4)

Other (Please specify): (5) _____

Q6 Gender Identity

Male (1)

Female (2)

Non-Binary (3)

Prefer not to say (4)

Other (Please specify): (5) _____

Q8 Would you describe yourself as transgender?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Prefer not to say (3)

Q10 Religion

Christian (1)

Muslim (2)

Catholic (3)

Hindu (4)

Buddhist (5)

Jewish (10)

Atheist (6)

Agnostic (7)

Non-Religious (8)

Other (Please specify): (9) _____



Q11 On average, what is your family's annual income?

- Less than \$10,000 (1)
- \$10,000 - \$19,999 (2)
- \$20,000 - \$29,999 (3)
- \$30,000 - \$39,999 (4)
- \$40,000 - \$49,999 (5)
- \$50,000 - \$59,999 (6)
- \$60,000 - \$69,999 (7)
- \$70,000 - \$79,999 (8)
- \$80,000 - \$89,999 (9)
- \$90,000 - \$99,999 (10)
- \$100,000 - \$149,999 (11)
- More than \$150,000 (12)

End of Block: Demographic Information

Start of Block: College Experience

Q13 Academic Year

- First Year (1)
 - Sophomore (2)
 - Junior (3)
 - Senior (4)
 - Other (Please specify): (5) _____
-

Q14 Do you belong to a sports team?

- Varsity (1)
 - Intramural (2)
 - Club (3)
 - Not a member (4)
-

Q15 Do you belong to a fraternity?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q16 Do you belong to a sorority?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q17 Are you a member of Reserve Officers' Training Core (ROTC)?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q18 How often do you attend a fraternity party?

- Never (1)
 - 1-2 times a month (2)
 - 3-5 times a month (3)
 - More than 5 times a month (4)
-

Q19 How often do you attend a party where alcohol was served?

- Never (1)
 - 1-2 times a month (2)
 - 3-5 times a month (3)
 - More than 5 times a month (4)
-

Q20 How often do you attend a bar/pub/club?

- Never (1)
 - 1-2 times a month (2)
 - 3-5 times a month (3)
 - More than 5 times a month (4)
-

Q21 Since entering college, how many dating partners have you had?

- None (1)
 - 1-2 (2)
 - 3-4 (3)
 - 5-7 (4)
 - 8-10 (5)
 - 11 or more (6)
-

Q22 Since entering college, how many sexual partners have you had?

None (1)

1-2 (2)

3-4 (3)

5-7 (4)

8-10 (5)

11-15 (6)

16 or more (7)

End of Block: College Experience

Start of Block: Drug/Alcohol Use

Q24 How often do you consume an alcoholic beverage?

- Never (1)
 - 1-2 times a month (2)
 - 3-5 times a month (3)
 - More than 5 times a month (4)
-

Q25 How often do you use marijuana?

- Never (1)
 - 1-2 times a month (2)
 - 3-5 times a month (3)
 - More than 5 times a month (4)
-

Q26 Have you ever used any other drugs (besides marijuana), including illicit (eg. cocaine) and prescription (eg. Adderall)?

Yes (Please specify drug): (1)

No (2)

Skip To: Q28 If Have you ever used any other drugs (besides marijuana), including illicit (eg. cocaine) and presc... = No

Display This Question:

If Have you ever used any other drugs (besides marijuana), including illicit (eg. cocaine) and presc... = Yes (Please specify drug):

Q27 How often did you use this drug?

Never (1)

1-2 times a month (2)

3-5 times a month (3)

More than 5 times a month (4)

Q28 How often do you consume a drink given by someone unknown?

- Never (1)
 - 1-2 times a month (2)
 - 3-5 times a month (3)
 - More than 5 times a month (4)
-

Q29 How often do you finish a drink after leaving it unattended?

- Never (1)
 - 1-2 times a month (2)
 - 3-5 times a month (3)
 - More than 5 times a month (4)
-

Q30 How often do you have sex after consuming alcohol/drugs?

- Never (1)
 - 1-2 times a month (2)
 - 3-5 times a month (3)
 - More than 5 times a month (4)
-

Q31 How often are you drunk/high during sex?

- Never (1)
 - 1-2 times a month (2)
 - 3-5 times a month (3)
 - More than 5 times a month (4)
-

Q32 Have you ever suspected or known you were given a drug without consent?

Yes (1)

No (2)

End of Block: Drug/Alcohol Use

Start of Block: Sexual Assault Experience Since Entering College

Q33 Have you ever felt threatened or humiliated by a dating partner?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q34 Have you ever been physically hurt by a dating partner?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q35 Have you ever experienced sexual assault since entering college?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Skip To: Q37 If Have you ever experienced sexual assault since entering college? = No

Display This Question:

If Have you ever experienced sexual assault since entering college? = Yes

Q36 How would you describe the assault?

Forced sexual assault only (1)

Alcohol or drug enabled sexual assault (2)

Both forced AND alcohol or drug enabled sexual assault (3)

Incapacitated sexual assault of another form (4)

Q37 Do you know someone who has experienced sexual assault?

Yes (1)

No (2)

End of Block: Sexual Assault Experience Since Entering College

Start of Block: Characteristics of Perpetrator

Q33 How many assailants were involved in the assault?

1 (1)

2-4 (2)

3-5 (3)

More than 5 (4)

Q34 How would you describe your relationship with the assailant? Check all that

apply:

A stranger you've never talked to/seen before (1)

Someone you've seen before but not talked to (2)

An acquaintance (3)

A co-worker/employer (4)

A classmate (5)

A professor/teaching assistant (6)

A roommate (7)

A friend (8)

A dating partner/spouse (9)

An ex-dating partner/spouse (10)

A relative (11)

Other (Please specify): (12) _____

Q35 Were you on a date with the perpetrator?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q36 How would you describe the race of the perpetrator? Check all that apply:

White (1)

Black or African American (2)

American Indian or Alaska Native (3)

Asian (4)

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)

Native American or American Indian (6)

Other (Please specify): (7) _____

End of Block: Characteristics of Perpetrator

Start of Block: Contextual Factors

Q38 How would you describe the perpetrator's substance use prior to the assault?

Check all that apply:

Drinking Alcohol (1)

Using Drugs (2)

Drinking Alcohol & Using Drugs (3)

Either Drinking Alcohol or Using Drugs but unsure as to which (4)

NOT Drinking Alcohol or Using Drugs (5)

Unknown (6)

None involved (7)

Q39 How would you describe your substance abuse prior to the assault? Check all

that apply:

Drinking alcohol (1)

Drunk (2)

Voluntarily used drugs (3)

Given drugs without knowledge or consent (4)

Unknown (5)

None involved (6)

Q40 Please describe the location of the assault. Check all that apply:

- Party on-campus (1)
- Party off-campus (2)
- On-campus (not at a party) (3)
- Dormitory/Residence Hall (4)
- Apartment (5)
- Outside but near where you live (6)
- Classroom/lab/campus building (7)
- Outside (not near where you live) (8)
- Off-campus (not at a party) (9)
- On-campus fraternity house (10)
- Off-campus fraternity house (11)
- Vehicle (12)
- Other person's living quarters (13)

Q43 Did you disclose the incident to family?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q44 Did you disclose the incident to friends?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q45 Did you disclose the incident to another person/group?

Yes (Please specify): (1) _____

No (2)

Q46 Did you contact a crisis center or other service for victims?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Skip To: Q48 If Did you contact a crisis center or other service for victims? = No

Display This Question:

If Did you contact a crisis center or other service for victims? = Yes

Q47 Did you contact a crisis center through the University of Pittsburgh?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q48 Did you take a sexual assault examination?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q49 Did you go to a hospital or emergency room?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q51 Did you report the incident to law enforcement?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Skip To: Q55 If Did you report the incident to law enforcement? = No

Display This Question:

If Did you report the incident to law enforcement? = Yes

Q52 Did you report to University officials or campus police?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Display This Question:

If Did you report the incident to law enforcement? = Yes

Q53 Did you report to local or state police?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Display This Question:

If Did you report the incident to law enforcement? = Yes

Q54 Did you regret reporting the incident?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q55 Did the assault affect your academics at Pitt?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q56 Following the assault, did any of the following occur? Check all that apply:

Dropped a class (1)

Changed a major/minor/certificate (2)

Failed a class (3)

Unaffected (4)

Q57 Did you move from your current residence?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q58 Did you quit your job?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q59 Did you seek psychological counseling?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Skip To: Q61 If Did you seek psychological counseling? = No

Display This Question:

If Did you seek psychological counseling? = Yes

Q60 Did you seek counseling through the University of Pittsburgh?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q61 Did you file a case against the perpetrator?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Skip To: Q63 If Did you file a case against the perpetrator? = No

Display This Question:

If Did you file a case against the perpetrator? = Yes

Q62 If yes, was the perpetrator punished?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q63 Did the perpetrator receive disciplinary action from the University of Pittsburgh?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Unknown (3)

Q64 Was the perpetrator arrested, convicted, or prosecuted by the criminal justice system?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Unknown (3)

End of Block: Reaching out for Help

Start of Block: University Sexual Assault Prevention

Q71 Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "The University of Pittsburgh does an adequate job of preventing sexual assault on campus."

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q72 Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "Programs, developed by the University of Pittsburgh, aimed at preventing sexual assault deter perpetrators from committing assault."

- Strongly agree (1)
 - Somewhat agree (2)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (4)
 - Strongly disagree (5)
-

Q73 Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "There is enough legal pressure and threat of disciplinary action on the part of the University of Pittsburgh to deter perpetrators of sexual assault."

- Strongly agree (1)
 - Somewhat agree (2)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (4)
 - Strongly disagree (5)
-

Q74 Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "There are adequate resources provided by the University of Pittsburgh for victims of psychological/emotional distress."

- Strongly agree (1)
 - Somewhat agree (2)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (4)
 - Strongly disagree (5)
-

Q75 Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "If you or someone you knew experienced assault, or any other form of distress, you would utilize/recommend University of Pittsburgh resources for counseling and support."

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

End of Block: University Sexual Assault Prevention

Start of Block: Do you know someone who was sexually assaulted on campus?

Q42 Do you know someone who was sexually assaulted on campus?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Skip To: End of Block If Do you know someone who was sexually assaulted on campus? = No

Display This Question:

If Do you know someone who was sexually assaulted on campus? = Yes

Q65 Do you know if the person sought out help?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Display This Question:

If Do you know someone who was sexually assaulted on campus? = Yes

Q66 Do you know if the person went to a hospital?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Display This Question:

If Do you know someone who was sexually assaulted on campus? = Yes

Q67

Do you know if the person went to a counseling or therapy center?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Display This Question:

If Do you know someone who was sexually assaulted on campus? = Yes

Q68 If applicable, in what other ways did the person seek out help?

Display This Question:

If Do you know someone who was sexually assaulted on campus? = Yes

Q69 Did you or the person assaulted report the incident?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Display This Question:

If Do you know someone who was sexually assaulted on campus? = Yes

Q70 Was there any disciplinary action as a result of reporting the incident? Briefly describe below:

End of Block: Do you know someone who was sexually assaulted on campus?

Appendix B Sample Interview Template for Survivors

1. Introductions of myself and explanations of research procedures. In other words, why I was conducting the research. Obtain consent and provide resources for support in the local community.
2. What would you like people to know about you and your experience? What do you want to share with others?
3. Does survey trend X make sense to you in the context of your experience? Have you heard of other individuals who report the same sentiment?

Note: Trend X included some of the following elements and others: distrust between students and administration, disconnect between survivor perceptions and general student perceptions, the role of alcohol/drugs in facilitating assault, the role of privilege/masculinity, cultural elements that perpetuate assault and rape stereotypes, etc.

4. Did you report your assault to Title IX? Get help in other ways? What are your thoughts on resources at Pitt?
5. Describe your experience with any of the above. How did it feel? Procedures you went through? Walk through what happened and who you interacted with.
6. Any follow-up questions pertaining to the information provided above.
7. Are there any other aspects of your story that you feel are important to share? How did you change before and after your assault?

Appendix C Sample Interview Template for Support Institutions

- 1.** Introductions of myself and explanations of research procedures. In other words, why I was conducting the research. Obtain consent.
- 2.** What procedures are followed when a student comes in reporting a sexual assault? What happens if a friend reports the incident? Can you walk me through the process?
- 3.** What works in the system? Where are the limitations? What can be improved upon?
- 4.** Explained distrust and disconnect that students expressed in survey. What are your thoughts on these subjects? Are you aware of these issues? What do you do to counter them? Are they merely due to misinformation or are additional factors at play?
- 5.** How does policy affect sexual assault survivors? Are there any recent changes that impact the way you interact with survivors? What are Pitt's policies and how do they compare to local, state, and national guidelines?
- 6.** How have attitudes/laws/policies changed historically? What is new or effective that was not previously part of the system? Are there any pending policies that could alter the landscape in the future?
- 7.** Are there any other aspects of your experience that you wish to share or feel are important to understanding your perspective?

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