

Barriers to Reporting Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment,
and Similar Offenses at Institutions of Higher Education

E Forney

University of Pittsburgh

Abstract

Sexual assault¹ is a huge problem universally. In the higher education sector of the United States, this is no exception. In fact, higher education in general has come under serious fire in the past decade for being what seems like a hotbed of offenses and poorly handled cases. Since many sexual assault cases at hundreds of US colleges were enumerated publically (Axon, 2014) more efforts have been made to reduce these issues on college campuses. Some such efforts include finding ways to increase reporting rates of sexual assault. If more incidents are reported, then campuses have the opportunity to resolve issues for students. The first step to increasing reporting is understanding how and why students (do not) report in the first place. This literature review examines various studies and reports relating to attitudes and behaviors around sexual assault reporting. Features of each study are noted and compared such as number and gender of participants (as well as other demographic information), whether or not the participants are students on college campuses, and the studies' major findings. From these studies, I strive to answer three research questions surrounding reporting:

1. How do sexual assaults get reported?
2. What are the barriers that prevent reporting?
3. How can campuses make changes to encourage safe and open reporting for all students?

This paper concludes by offering recommendations for student services professionals to consider implementing on their own campuses.

¹ In this paper, I use the term “sexual assault” to refer to any rape, assault, harassment, or offense of a sexual nature or which is gender-based.

Barriers to Reporting Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment,
and Similar Offenses at Institutions of Higher Education

The broad topic for my literature review revolves around a large issue on college campuses today that is more and more being entangled with legal systems on and off campus: sexual assault and harassment. There are many nuances and direction to this broad topic, so I decided to focus specifically on one sub-topic that would allow me to tailor my research questions while still finding a breadth of articles and sources. Specifically, I am looking into student behaviors around reporting (or not reporting) sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other kinds of harassment or personal offenses. The research questions I hope to explore are the following:

1. How do sexual assaults get reported?
2. What are the barriers that prevent reporting?
3. How can campuses make changes to encourage safe and open reporting for all students?

Political Context

I was inspired to learn more about the topic of sexual assault and harassment reporting when I learned of the existence of the Safe Campus Act of 2015 (Nanos, 2015). This proposed bill is currently an active piece of legislation that has yet to be approved or failed by Congress. If passed, this ironically named bill would essentially make it impossible for a university to enforce sanctions which protect victims² unless the victim chooses to report the incident to law enforcement and start a full-blown investigation (House of Representatives Bill 3403, 2015).

² I use the term “victim” to refer to the person who has been (allegedly) assaulted and “perpetrator” to refer to the (alleged) assaulter. The reasoning for this choice is because these terms are the most common in academic and legal discussions of sexual assault. The term “victim” instead of “survivor” is not meant to diminish anyone’s experiences, nor is the term “perpetrator” meant to automatically assign responsibility.

Should the victim report to law enforcement, then the university would be allowed to enforce sanctions, although only for up to 30 days. (Examples of university sanctions include changing housing assignments, issuing no-contact agreements, and changing course schedules). The victim would also need to testify and deal with the time-consuming and stressful ordeal of prosecution against an assailant. Much of the uproar against the bill through news sources assumes that victims would not wish to report the sexual assault to law enforcement for a number of reasons—fear of retaliation, mistrust of law enforcement, and wishes to settle the offense without prosecution are common themes.

History of the Problem

One groundbreaking study by Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski (1987) has been attributed to the reason that this field of study exists at all. In their study, the authors exposed that the rate of reporting was surprisingly low for female students, estimating that around 10% of all assaults on female students were reported at all. This percentage was even lower for rapes specifically, at 5% reporting the incident. Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski (1987) found that the victim's consumption of alcohol was usually related to the unwillingness to report (p. 167). Strong feelings of self-blame or partial blame related to alcohol and/or the victim's role in the assault also caused female victims to avoid coming forward with their stories. The discovery that this statistic was so low set into motion a series of follow-up studies and related reports. In my literature review, I have gathered as many of these sources as possible. I compare study findings and/or literature reviews to come up with my own categories of barriers to sexual assault reporting and categories of those who receive reports. By looking at these trends, I draw conclusions about how college staff members could possibly adjust their student services to allow for a higher reporting rate and to make students feel welcomed and supported at all times.

Literature Review Tactics

My Article Comparison Chart (Appendix A) contains the selection of studies which I was able to locate on my topic of sexual assault reporting issues and barriers. In general, I made use of academic databases such as ERIC which feature articles covering issues specific to higher education. Within higher education journals, I used search terms such as “sexual assault reporting” and “barriers” but also considered articles on topics such as safe campus environments and educational policy. I also drew from various other academic databases which focus on fields like clinical psychology, feminist theory, and violent criminology. Articles from these databases sometimes covered topics like sexual assault and were a useful addition to the literature review. And finally, I made use of general databases, such as Google Scholar and the University of Pittsburgh’s library of articles.

Sources were located by the following search terms: college, higher education, university, students, sexual assault, sexual harassment, rape, barriers, reporting. This tactic returned many results relating to this large-scale issue, but some of the articles were not appropriate for my literature review (for example, articles discussing the effectiveness of bystander training were not selected for this literature review as they do not discuss barriers to or behaviors around sexual assault reporting). Some articles were rejected if they could not be related to the realm of higher education or if they could not be related to an American context.

Report Recipients

Sexual assault is such a personal offense that it is unsurprising that each victim chooses to deal with the aftermath according to their own needs. While campuses want to be involved in making the student experience as positive as possible, often it is not the victim’s desire to involve campus staff members and instead disclose personal experiences to closer confidantes,

such as friends and family (Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner, 2003; Orchowski, Meyer, Gidycz, 2009; Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012). This first section of my literature review is looking into where stories of sexual assault are shared, exploring the different individuals and organizations who become responsible for helping out victims who choose to share with them. The focus of the Orchowski, Meyer, and Gidycz (2009) paper was specifically on where students go with their stories, so it served as the basis for the following categories.

Police and Law Enforcement

A victim choosing to bring a report to law enforcement is incredibly rare “a very low percentage of victims (2.1%) reported their victimization to the police” (Fisher, Daigle, Cullen & Turner, 2003, p. 24). Victims generally do not want to take a step like this which they view as so serious and time-consuming. In addition, there is a feeling among victims that the police are not trustworthy, that they will not treat with victim with respect, or that they will not provide the right amount of action or concern to victims (Vopni, 2006). The low reporting to police implies that campus services available to students need to improve; without other avenues, no changes can be made to better individual and systemic problems related to low reporting rates.

Campus Authorities

Campus authorities include staff members who are involved with serving students who come forward (such as Title IX coordinators, sexual assault advisors, and student affairs staff members all the way up to the Dean of Students or VP of Student Affairs). It is my belief that campus authorities can best assist students who wish to report, so this literature review is intended to advise this population of student services professionals. Unfortunately, students are only slightly more likely to come forward with a sexual assault allegation to a campus official: “4.0% reported their victimization to campus authorities [regardless of where it took place].

Among on-campus incidents, just more than 5% were reported to campus authorities” (Fisher, Daigle, Cullen & Turner, 2003, p. 24). Sexual assaults are much more prevalent on college campuses than in the general population: in the US, the estimate is one in five women and one in 33 men, while on college campuses it is closer to one in four women and one in 20 men (Westat, 2015). The fact that reporting rates are not higher on college campuses is worrying.

Resident Assistants

Victims, especially those who are assaulted in dormitories, may reveal that they have been assaulted to an RA in a regular meeting or a drop-in meeting (Orchowski, Meyer, & Gidycz, 2009). Reporting to an RA usually means that the report makes its way up through the system to a staff member who is trained to deal with specifics, such as a Resident Director, Housing Officers, or staff members previously mentioned in Title IX or Student Affairs departments. While it is good to hear that there is a point of contact on campus which student victims do feel comfortable around, sometimes students are unaware that RAs are required reporters of such incidents. If it is the case that victims are only reporting by accident—that they believe they are offering up information in a confidential environment—then it is crucial that those who manage RAs make clear the required reporter status which RAs have. Increasing reporting through false promises of confidentiality, intentional or not, is not an ethical way to accomplish this goal.

Informal Disclosing

By far, the most popular method of reporting is hardly considered reporting at all. Many students who become victims of sexual assaults end up disclosing their experiences to friends. Fisher, Daigle, Turner, and Cullen (2003) found that 70% of sharing was with parties other than police and campus officials, and 90% of that was to friends. A smaller proportion is to family

members, classmates or peers, significant others, or other people on campus such as RAs, advisors, or professors. Orchowksi and Gidycz (2012) did a follow-up survey based on these original findings in which they explored how female victims share with peers, connecting the likelihood to disclose to alcohol involved in the assault, victim/perpetrator relationship, how frequently the victim shares personal information on a day-to-day basis, and what attachment style the victim has. McMahon et al. (2014) focused on those peers who were told about sexual assaults by their friends who had become victims, finding that friends are likely to defer to the victim's choice.

Campus Mental Health Services

Mental health services on campus include private, confidential counselors who can mentor a student through a traumatic experience or mental health issue, such as a sexual assault. While this type of disclosing is a great measure to take for the victim's personal well-being, this type of reporting often leaves the perpetrator out of the equation. This is often the victim's wish. However, this leaves the campus at large vulnerable to potential future assaults by the same perpetrator who cannot receive any counseling or sanctions from campus staff members. The perpetrator may not even realize that they have done harm.

Off-Campus Counselors

Another arena for victims to pursue is off-campus counselors. These include psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and mental health or emotional therapists. Again, this method of disclosing is personally beneficial to victims and a great step for them to take. However, like reporting to on-campus mental health services, the stories remain confidential, and the perpetrator is never approached with either counseling or sanctions. Essentially, reporting

only to these services fixes an individual problem, which is a positive, but does not begin to fix a systemic problem which higher education is so strongly hoping to fix.

Survey Responses

A surprising final grouping which was included by Orchowski, Meyer, and Gidycz (2009) was survey responses. These authors found that victims were likely to report an assault to a survey that promised anonymity. Perhaps there is an understanding about surveys and research that the participant data is confidential and their identities are anonymized through aggregate reporting. This understanding by students makes sharing personal information through surveys common. This is a positive finding for knowing that students may be more likely to report should they discover that their stories will truly be confidential. Being able to promise that the actions taken to help victims will not otherwise disrupt their lives or reveal their identity to the perpetrator or others may increase student victim reporting.

Reporting Barriers

While not every victim feels the need to make a report, many more do want to speak out, but find that it is too difficult to do so. The studies I reviewed discussed many different kinds of barriers that are up against safe and reliable reporting, which have been grouped into nine categories. These categories are drawn mainly from Smith (2010) and Weiss (2011), both of whom made careful decisions in dividing reasons for not reporting into categories.

Shame/Embarrassment/Guilt

One common thread across many tales from victims are negative feelings of shame, embarrassment, and guilt. These self-directed emotions are incredibly common among victims—almost every author I read about mentioned these emotions as being part of the barriers. Sable, Danis, Mauzy, and Gallagher (2006) found in their study on common reporting barriers that

shame, guilt, or embarrassment was the most prevalent barrier for both male and female victims. Weiss (2010) focused specifically on how a victim's shame can affect their reporting behaviors, finding that it deterred men and women. Females victims in Weiss (2010) felt that they deserved what happened to them to a degree, that they were disgraced by the sexual assault, or that reporting would spiral into a public defamation; male victims felt that they lost power by becoming victims, were emasculated by sexual assault, and feared they would be exposed or accused of being homosexual, queer, or not manly. The serious nature of sexual assault is luckily becoming more known in the broader higher education sphere with movements like It's On Us and Take Back the Night. Hopefully, these feelings of shame, embarrassment, and guilt for being the victim of a crime instead of the perpetrator should lessen in American society broadly as time goes on.

Fear of Disbelief by Staff

A distressing reason for underreporting which staff members should note is that victims often do not think they will be believed should they come forward with their allegations. Many victims will not come forward unless there are elements to their story which make the situation more clear cut; for example, Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, and Turner (2003) found that victims who were assaulted by strangers or were assaulted in the presence of a weapon felt that they had more believable stories and thus were more likely to come forward. Additionally, victims whose stories contained elements which seem to make the situation more unclear such as the presence of alcohol or being in a relationship with the perpetrator were very unlikely to go to campus staff or the police. However, although these students were unlikely to report, they were still likely to disclose what occurred to them with their friends.

Lack of Action or Respect by Staff

Another reason which should worry staff members who do this work is that victims sometimes believe that they will not be treated well should they come forward (Pino & Meier, 1999; Orchowski, Meyer, & Gidycz, 2009). The concept of ill-treatment can come in different forms. One hardship which victims often experience with staff members is a mismatch of expectations: staff members appear not to take the victim seriously or otherwise diminish the severity of the assault or the emotions surrounding the assault. This can be especially true for those who are suffering through mental anguish due to the assault or who have mental illnesses since these often cause strong and serious emotional responses.

Another way in which victims can feel underserved is due to the lack of understanding around Title IX policies and mediation (Orchowski, Meyer, & Gidycz, 2009). Victims can feel that staff members do not trust them when they hear words like “alleged” which speak to the nebulous nature of this work. While ideally sympathy, support, and trust should be offered to a victim, a Title IX practitioner or mediator must also keep an unbiased view of the situation when dealing with multiple parties. This can cause the victim to feel as if they lack for a confidante.

Lastly, a victim may feel that a staff member does not do enough because there is a lack of respect. Language coming from staff members who ask about the situation could come off as victim blaming which “revictimizes” the victim. Questions like, “Did you have any alcohol?” and “Do you remember what you were wearing?” could be crucial to an investigation if they serve to uncover the truth, but could be taken as accusations of guilt by the victim. “college women with a history of sexual victimization perceived themselves to be less likely to report incidents of sexual victimization to any campus agency (with the exception of reporting on a survey) compared to college women without a history of sexual victimization” (Orchowski,

Meyer, & Gidycz, 2009, p. 850). Cohn, Zinzow, Resnick, and Kilpatrick (2012) did a study on women who had experienced rape, considering drug and alcohol use (or forced use) as a correlate to likelihood of reporting. Women who had been under the influence of drugs or alcohol (whether by their choice or not) were less likely to report, primarily because they feared they would not be believed and because they thought they may be treated poorly in the justice system. While this study was not specific to higher education professionals, these fears toward police and lawyers may also be extended to campus authorities.

Fear of Retaliation by Perpetrator or Others

Another fear which can prevent a victim (especially a female victim) from coming forth with an assault is that the perpetrator or others will retaliate against the victim: “Respondents perceived the [barrier] of ‘fear of retaliation’ ... to be significantly greater for women than for men” (Sable, Danis, Mauzy, & Gallagher, 2006, p. 159). This could indicate a misunderstanding of the confidential nature of this work in some cases (especially for cases in which the victim and perpetrator were not well acquainted). For a situation in which the victim/perpetrator relationship is closer, it may be more obvious to the perpetrator who it was that came forth with allegations, and thus this fear is not completely unfounded.

Relation with the Perpetrator

Victims who have a more personal relationship to perpetrators may fear reporting “because of financial dependence on the perpetrator, lack of funds to acquire transportation and childcare and money barriers” (Smith, 2010, p. 3). This dependence is usually in the form of financial entanglement. For example, if a college student is rooming with a perpetrator in an apartment, it may be financially impossible for the victim to break the apartment lease and separate from the perpetrator. Other ways the victim may rely on the perpetrator can be subtle

such as the victim needs the perpetrator's car to travel to campus, the victim needs their perpetrator classmate to complete a group project, etc. Smith (2010) astutely points out that these reasons may be more prevalent for students of color and students from low socio-economic backgrounds who feel they do not have options outside of their dependence on their assailant. Cultural values such as loyalty to a community or family may also increase this barrier to racial minorities.

Fear of Being Viewed Differently

This is another category where male victims feel a great deal of anxiety. Because most perpetrators are male, male students who are assaulted by other male students fear that they will be misconstrued as homosexual when they are not attracted to men in reality (Sable, Danis, Mauzy, & Gallagher, 2006; Weiss, 2010). The female victims who are assaulted are not immune to this fear of being viewed differently however. They may not be accused of being homosexual, but they could be considered more sexually open than they are in reality. This concept of "slut shaming" is rampant in mishandled cases where the victim is female, and training around this issue could be invaluable to campus staff development.

Lack of Understanding of Assault

One reason for not coming forward is generally believing that assault did not occur (Weiss, 2011; Cohn, Zinzow, Resnick, & Kilpatrick, 2013). This seems to be a view that is changing as sexual assault courses are becoming more popular on college campuses as part of student orientations and co-curricular learning. However, there are still misinformed beliefs out there, sometimes held by victims. For example, a victim may believe that the perpetrator did not intend to cause harm, and that this disqualifies the perpetrator from being an assailant. There are other reasons to believe the assault did not qualify, such as the presence of drugs/alcohol, mental

illness, the closeness of the victim/perpetrator relationship, and the victim originally intending to have sexual contact with the perpetrator and later changing their mind (Cohn, Zinzow, Resnick, & Kilpatrick, 2013). Some of these reasons have been categorized separately (such as the next reason).

Lack of (Sufficient) Injury or Harm

Victims will sometimes feel that the assault does not qualify as assault due to a lack of injury, physical or emotional (Weiss, 2011; Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012). Some victims will be misinformed that sexual assault only qualifies if there was some sort of physical force, ignoring emotional coercion. An especially tricky situation to navigate is one in which the victim feels conflicting emotions over the assault: the victim did not consent to any sexual activity, but the activity was physically gratifying despite the mental disagreement. This element of cognitive dissonance can cause such confusion for the student that they may be unwilling to come forward until they believe they have a more solidified story and clearer opinions about what happened.

Distance from a “Victim” Status

One point which Weiss (2011) drives home is that coming forward with a story of sexual assault usually means that the individual is admitting to being a victim of assault. While students may avoid the negative self-image that can come with identifying as a “victim” by thinking of themselves as “survivors” of sexual assault, not all students wish to bother with either label. Victimhood implies that the student should feel fragile, sad, and helpless, while survival implies that the student is brave, has gone through a traumatic ordeal, and often serves as an example to others. Should the victim feel that the assault was not a large traumatic event or that their emotions are not negatively altered, they may believe these feelings to be indications that nothing happened. And, on the other hand, a student who is hoping to avoid having to deal with

tough emotional battles, opting to forget about the event altogether, would be unlikely to relive the experience by coming forward to an authority figure.

Cultural Factors

Smith (2010) took note of some cultural factors which could discourage a student of color (particularly a female student of color) from coming forward with an assault. Smith noted that treatment centers and student support services by their nature rely on “western values that conflict with the cultural ideals of ethnic women” (p. 7). Centers often accept students on their own as opposed to coming in with friends or family, which shows a preference for individual independence over community or family. Also, the communicative and emotional nature of telling a story of sexual assault relies on emotional vulnerability and expression and very open, personal communication; some cultures discourage these, preferring to relate in more tactful, indirect ways and to keep emotions such as sadness and anger under control.

Campus Recommendations

Based on the sources I was able to find and the general trends I pulled from all of them, I am able to discuss recommendations which college campuses may wish to consider.

Implementing changes such as the following may help the institution to increase informed and willing reporting which in turn could lead to more success stories for mediating cases of sexual assault within the legal boundaries of Title IX.

A Victim Who Does Not Feel Victimized

Weiss (2011) elegantly points out that “persons who are raped or sexually assaulted [sometimes] neutralize their unwanted sexual experiences by rejecting a victim identity” (p. 14). This emotional coping mechanism is a way for victims to distance themselves from the assault. However, in order to do this, the victim rejects the feelings of victimization by denying that they

are a victim at all. While the emotional benefits are helpful to students, remaining in denial about what happened can be repressive (potentially causing emotional trauma in the future if left undealt with) and also means that a perpetrator goes unpunished. A shift in language from victim to more positive or neutral terms could aid college campuses (“survivor” is becoming a more popular term currently). Removing the stigma from victim (the person, not the word) can help victims both to accept what has happened to them and to report the assault so that justice may play itself out for perpetrators.

Better Sexual Assault Education and Awareness

Within the literature there were multiple sources which report that victims sometimes do not understand that an assault has happened to them (Pino & Meier, 1999; Cohn, Zinzow, Resnick, & Kilpatrick, 2013). It follows that there are students who do not report their assaults simply because they do not believe an assault occurred at all. Continuing to promote education and awareness around sexual assault and its definitions can assist campuses with reducing this ignorance. Clear policies surrounding consent, alcohol and drug use, and related topics can also help students to be aware of how they can navigate otherwise grey areas (Streng & Kamimura, 2015). There is currently legislation in the works which would normalize standards for handling sexual assault across all 50 states (Redden, 2016). Staff members (especially those who are with public institutions) who have influence over university policies should be aware of local, state, and national policies and develop campus policies which are not contradictory while still providing top quality services to students.

Resources for Non-Female Victims Too

While the large majority of sexual assault victims are female, there are still cases of male victims and victims who do not fall in this gender binary (Westat, 2015). Ensuring that there are

services that feel approachable by these populations is crucial. For example, having sexual assault resources housed in the campus women's center could send the message that victims and bystanders who are not women are not welcome to report their cases. Additionally, sexual assault advisors should be trained on how to cater to fears which men specifically experience, such as the belief that they may be misrepresented as homosexual or queer (Weiss, 2010). Training on cases which are not heterosexual and which involve students who are not cisgendered males and females would also be beneficial, but research in this area is very lacking at this time.

Transparent Processes and Policies

Every student should be very familiar with the policies which their university has surrounding the code of conduct, and especially sexual assault. Streng and Kamimura (2015) found that, while having a policy specifically for sexual misconduct did not increase reporting rates, it did make handling cases of reported sexual assault easier for both staff and students. Orientation leaders and residential staff and student-staff can work together to create educational presentations which teach students about codes of conduct which they are expected to follow. Not only will students understand what is acceptable behavior, but they may also gain a better understanding of how the process of reporting works in such seminars. Students should be able to list who is a required reporter of sexual assault and who can provide complete confidentiality both on and off campus. Students should also understand how a report can be made, to whom, and the types of mediation and sanctions available.

Limitations and Further Research

While completing my literature review, limitations and research gaps became clear through searching for articles. There is currently great deal more literature on female victims than on male victims or victims of other genders. While women are much more likely to be

victims of this kind of crime (Westat, 2015), having more research on men and non-binary individual would be useful for campuses to tailor their offerings. In addition to this, all research I found had a heteronormative tone—even cases that explored male-on-male assault (and there were no cases in my research of female-on-male assault) discussed them in heteronormative terms. For example, male victims were concerned that they would be considered homosexual or queer (Weiss, 2010). This statement negates the idea that male victims may actually be openly homosexual, bisexual, or queer but still victims.

One limitation that became clear from reading Smith's 2010 dissertation was there is a lack of information on how students of color report their assaults. While there is worked relating to the prevalence of sexual assault for racial minorities, Smith's work stood out because it considered racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural factors that can affect a victim's likelihood to report. Her dissertation largely drew conclusions from somewhat related works, combining cultural theories with statistics about those populations. Studies specifically about cultural influences around sexual assault reporting would strengthen the field and allow student services professionals to approach this work from a non-Western, non-American, or non-white perspective if necessary. This work would not only be useful to sexual assault advisors, but international student services, disability services, financial aid for low-SES students, and legal services for undocumented students.

Finally, in my search for relevant research, I became frustrated to find that there were fewer resources about reporting on college campuses than I initially believed I would find. Much of the research about reporting barriers and behaviors came from journals who did not discuss higher education contexts, which made it difficult to accurately apply the work to higher education specifically. There is certainly work around sexual assault on college campuses which

is positive, but seeing so few about reporting barriers themselves is discouraging. While it is important to work to prevent sexual assault on campuses, the reality is that sexual assault is still rampant and will likely always exist. Prevention research needs to go hand-in-hand with reaction research so that current victims are not pushed aside.

Conclusion

Through my literature review, I have selected and appraised articles, studies, and dissertations in order to determine answers to my stated research questions. After contextualizing my research by discussing current and historical socio-politics, I discuss the literature itself. Sexual assaults are reported in a number of ways, mostly informally to peers, and to a much smaller extent, to campus authorities, police and law enforcement, to resident assistants, and to counseling service on and off campus. A fair amount also admit to disclosing via anonymous surveys or that they would disclose in this manner. Research reports many various reasons why a victim might not report a sexual assault; I have grouped these reasons into ten salient categories. Finally, I have used the knowledge I gained from this literature review to present recommendations appropriate for a student services staff. These recommendations for policy, services, and staff behavior will hopefully serve as a crucial discussion point for many campuses looking to better their student services.

References

- Axon, R. (2014). Department of Education releases list of schools under Title IX investigation. *USA Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/05/01/department-of-education-office-for-civil-rights-title-ix-sexual-assaults/8567941/>.
- Cohn, A., Zinzow, H., Resnick, H., & Kilpatrick, D. (2012). Correlates of reasons for not reporting date rape to police: Results from a national telephone household probability sample of women with forcible or drug-or alcohol facilitated/incapacitated rape. *J Interpersonal Violence, 28*(3), 455-473.
- Fisher, B. S., Daigle, L. E., Cullen, F. T., & Turner, M. G. (2003). Reporting sexual victimization to the police and others: Results from a national-level study of college women. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 30*, 6-38. doi:10.1177/0093854802239161
- Koss, M. P., Gidycz, C. A., & Wisniewski, N. (1987). The scope of rape: Incidence and prevalence of sexual aggression and victimization in a national sample of higher education students. *Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology, 55*, 162-170.
- McMahon, S., Allen, C. T., Postmus, J. L., McMahon, S. M., Peterson, N. A., & Hoffman, M. L. (2014). Measuring bystander attitudes and behavior to prevent sexual violence. *Journal of American College Health, 62*(1), 58-66. doi:10.1080/07448481.2013.849258
- Nanos, E. (2015). 'The Safe Campus Act': A bill you need to know about. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/elura-nanos/the-safe-campus-act-a-bil b 8316646.html>.

- Orchowski, L. M. & Gidycz, C. A. (2012). To whom do college women confide following sexual assault? A prospective study of predictors of sexual assault disclosure and social reactions. *Violence Against Women, 18*(3), 264-288.
- Orchowski, L. M., Meyer, D., & Gidycz, C. A. (2009). College women's likelihood to report unwanted sexual experiences to campus agencies: Trends and Correlates. *Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma, 18*(8), 839-858. doi:10.1080/10926770903291779
- Pino, N. W., & Meier, R. F. (1999). Gender differences in rape reporting. *Sex Roles, 40*(11), 979-990.
- Redden, M. (2016). Meet the 24-year-old who could change how the US handles sexual assaults. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/feb/23/sexual-assault-survivors-rape-kits-us-senate-bill-white-house>.
- Sable, M. R., Danis, F., Mauzy, D. L., & Gallagher, S. K. (2006). Barriers to reporting sexual assault for women and men: Perspectives of college students. *Journal of American College Health, 55*(3), 157-162.
- Safe Campus Act of 2015, H. R. 3403, 114th Cong. (2015). Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/3403/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22safe+campus+act%22%5D%7D&resultIndex=1>.
- The Sexual Assault Survivors' Rights Act of 2015, Massachusetts H. R. 1278, 189th House. (2015). Retrieved from <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/189/House/H1278>.
- Smith, M. J. (2010). *Reporting differences among sexually assaulted college women: A cultural exploration* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.

- Streng, T. K. & Kamimura, A. (2015). Sexual assault prevention and reporting on college campuses in the US: A review of policies and recommendations. *Journal of Education and Practice, 6*(3), 65-71.
- Vopni, V. (2006). Young women's experience with reporting sexual assault to police. *Canadian Woman Studies, 25*, 107-114.
- Weiss, K. G. (2010). Too ashamed to report: Deconstructing the shame of sexual Victimization. *Feminist Criminology, 5*(3), 286–310. doi:10.1177/1557085110376343
- Weiss, K. G. (2011). Neutralizing sexual victimization: A typology of victim's non-reporting accounts. *Theoretical Criminology, 1*(23), 1-23.
- Westat. (2015). *Report on the AAU campus climate survey on sexual assault and sexual misconduct*. Rockville, MD: Cantor, D., Fisher, B., Chibnall, S., Townsend, R., Lee, H., Bruce, C., & Thomas, G.

Appendix A

Article Comparison Chart

Author(s)	Year	Topic Keywords	Participants or Subjects	N	Methods Type	Genders	Research Questions or Purpose
Cohn, Zinzow, Resnick, & Kilpatrick	2013	non-reporting (rape only), correlates for drugs/alcohol and mental illness	women (not necessarily students) who did not report rapes	441	national telephone survey	female	How do perpetrator's rape tactics (such as taking advantage of the victim using drugs/alcohol or the victim's mental illness) affect the victim's likelihood of reporting?
Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner	2003	victim reporting, victim disclosing	college students	4446 (223 HEIs)	qualitative; computer-assisted surveys and phone interviews	female	Where do SA/rapes get reported or disclosed? What are the contexts and influencers for reporting or disclosing?
Koss, Gidycz, Wisniewski	1987	sexual assault prevalence	college students	6159 (32 HEIs)	qualitative surveys administered in classrooms	female victims, male perpetrators	How prevalent is sexual aggression and victimization?
McMahon et al	2014	measuring bystander reporting	college first-years	4054 (1 HEI)	qualitative pen-and-paper survey	both	How likely are bystanders to report SA? What factors affect this likelihood? Are current metrics for measuring these factors effective?
Orchowski & Gidycz	2012	victim confiding, supporter response	first-year college residents	374 (1 HEI)	qualitative surveys and potential follow-up questions	female	Can we predict who will report and when? Who do women tell after something happens to them? How do (informal) recipients reply to hearing this news?
Orchowski, Meyer, & Gidycz	2009	victim reporting	college students	300 (1 HEI)	quantitative survey	female	Are women most likely to report SA to the police, friends, counseling centers, their RAs, or on surveys? How does past victimization affect this likelihood?

Author(s)	Year	Topic Keywords	Participants or Subjects	N	Methods Type	Genders	Research Questions or Purpose
Pino & Meier	1999	victim reporting (rape only), gender differences	any person, not necessarily students	897 (816 female, 81 male)	national quantitative survey	both	Are men and women equally likely to report rape, and if not, who is more likely? What factors into this likelihood?
Sable, Danis, Mauzy, Gallagher	2006	barriers to reporting, gender differences	college students	215 (118 female, 97 male)	quantitative survey	both	What barriers prevent victims from reporting? Which barriers are bigger?
Smith	2010	barriers to reporting, cultural lens	college students	395 (2 HEIs)	quantitative survey	female	Do reporting rates vary among sexually assaulted college females based on cultural affiliation?
Streng & Kamimura	2015	policy review, victim reporting	large higher education institutions (>18k undergraduates)	10 HEIs and legislation	literature review	both, focus on female victims	This study reviews sexual assault or misconduct policies on college campuses and presents recommendations for improvement.
Weiss	2010	the effect of shame on reporting	any person, not necessarily students	(116 female, 20 male)	review of qualitative interviews and surveys from a national source	both	How does shame (felt by the victim) affect sexual assault reporting by the victim?
Weiss	2011	victim non-reporting	any person, not necessarily students, who did not report their sexual assault	792	review of qualitative interviews and surveys from a national source	both	When and why do victims choose not to report?

Author(s)	Main Findings	Concluding Thoughts & Recommendations
Cohn, Zinzow, Resnick, & Kilpatrick	Women were reluctant to report to police or lawyers for eight main reasons, the most common of which were that they were not sure a crime occurred, did not believe they had enough proof of a crime, or did not think the incident was serious enough to report.	Campus authorities must be aware of the perceived barriers, especially for at-risk victims such as those with mental illness or who were under the influence of drugs or alcohol during an assault. However, this study (like a few others in this chart) is not specific to the higher education environment, which presents a limitation on applying this data to college students specifically.
Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner	"although few incidents--including rapes--are reported to the police and/or to campus authorities, a high proportion are disclosed to someone else (mainly to friends)" (p. 6). ~70% of cases are disclosed informally, and nearly 90% of that reporting was to friends (so, around 2/3 of the reporting/disclosing is made informally to friends); ~2% of reporting is to police, and ~4% is to campus staff (5% if you only count on-campus incidents). Victims were more likely to disclose to friends if drugs and/or alcohol were involved, but were less likely to report to authorities for the same reason. Victims were more likely to report to authorities if there was a weapon involved or the assault was by a stranger.	Teach students how to support their friends and peers who have been victims while encouraging them to consider making reports to campus authorities. There is a strong stigma around drug and alcohol use that may lead victims to believe they are implicated in cases--this stigma must be combatted.
Koss, Gidycz, Wisniewski	10% of female students report their assaults (only 5% for rape specifically); victim consuming alcohol = less likely to report; 54% of women claimed they had been victimized on the survey, while only 25% of men admitted to sexually aggressive behavior.	The conclusions from this paper were that current metrics for measuring prevalence of SA were inadequate: too focused on force and violence, not paying attention to coercion or the ignoring of the victim's desires, mostly determined by SA reported to police (a small percentage of all SA).
McMahon et al	Bystander attitudes on whether action should be taken depend on whether they are 1) accompanying a victim so the victim might report or 2) taking reporting into their own hands. Students' actions were not swayed by more "innocuous" behaviors such as using sexist language, indicating there may be a perceived disconnect between day-to-day sexism and sexual assault.	Increasing bystander education and SA prevention should account for different types of action (accompanying victim, counseling victim, reporting perpetrator themselves). It should also address socio-cultural factors and day-to-day sexism, teaching students on how to be advocates and agents of change instead of merely reactive.
Orchowski & Gidycz	Women tend to confide in female peers. Those who often seek support, those with strong attachment styles, and those who often disclose other stressful facts about themselves were more likely to share. There is an inverse relationship between the victim knowing perpetrator and victim sharing, and between the amount of alcohol involved and the victim sharing	Although there were more female-to-female disclosures, the numbers of responses from male supporters were surprisingly similar to those of female supporters, which indicates that the supporter's gender is not necessarily an important factor for how he/she will react.
Orchowski, Meyer, & Gidycz	Women felt most likely to report victimization via a survey, then to a friend, police, counseling center, their RA. Women who had never been assaulted and past victims both indicated they would respond to a survey in the same way, but past victims reported that they would be less likely to hypothetically report to a person or service in the future.	Women with a history of victimization are more unlikely to report in any way; therefore, ensuring that services offer a positive (or, at least not-negative, not re-victimizing) experience is crucial for continuing to lower SA rates everywhere.

Author(s)	Main Findings	Concluding Thoughts & Recommendations
Pino & Meier	Women were more likely to report rape than men. For women alone, participants were more likely to report a rape if it was "stereotypical" (forcible, by a stranger, weapon involved, etc). Amongst men, participants were more likely to report a rape if they did not feel it jeopardized their masculinity.	Myths about rape are different based on the victim's gender. Keeping these differences in mind can affect the competencies which practitioners need to develop in order to successfully work with both male and female victims.
Sable, Danis, Mauzy, Gallagher	Both genders felt they were barred by their internalized shame/guilt/embarrassment, had confidentiality concerns, and were concerned about not being believed. Women: fear of retaliation, financial dependence on perpetrator, not wanting family/friend to be prosecuted, and lack of resources were additional barriers. Men: fear of being judged as homosexual (when they are not homosexual) and disbelief that prosecution would be effective were additional barriers	While men and women do perceive different barriers, certain barriers are universal despite gender. Battling the shame of victimhood is a cultural issue, and ensuring safe, confidential, and encouraging services is a structural issue.
Smith	Cultural factors can increase barriers to reporting for women of color who come from non-white, non-American, and non-Western backgrounds.	Staff should remember cultural competencies when advising students and when promoting SA assistance services.
Streng & Kamimura	Schools with policies that are more generally about student conduct do not necessarily receive fewer sexual assault reports. However, clearer and more specific policies made handling cases easier for staff and students.	Policies should certainly exist, but having a clear policy is not enough. Having successful reporting goes beyond having a good policy.
Weiss	Weiss explored the prevalence of shame narratives for men and women. Women are: deserving (the victim believes she is partially responsible), disgraced (a woman is irrevocably defiled if she is assaulted), or defamed (the victim's sexual life is publically scrutinized). Men are: disempowered (the victim feels he was powerless to stop an assault, often due to an outside factor, such as alcohol consumption), emasculated (a victim is no longer a man if he has been assaulted), or exposed (specifically, exposed as homosexual or otherwise queer and thus "not manly").	Fighting stigma is still a huge part of the work that needs to be done surrounding sexual assault and specifically to encourage more informed and eager reporting.
Weiss	There are four kinds of accounts which victims use to justify not reporting: 1) criminal intent was lacking 2) serious injury was lacking 3) victim innocence was lacking, 4) "victim" is not how they feel.	Justifying non-reporting can be a coping mechanism and give a victim peace of mind. However, if the victim feels the need to downplay the seriousness of the SA because they are not informed about reporting options or are otherwise deterred to report, there is a larger issue.