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Sexual assault survivors’ perceptions of campus judicial systems.
Rape Survivors' Perceptions of Campus Judicial Systems

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Abstract—The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the experiences and perceptions of college sexual assault survivors who seek formal, on-campus action against their perpetrators. The authors interviewed seven female survivors from various institutions across the country and compiled themes and suggestions relating to their experiences. Participants reported substantial dissatisfaction with both the on-campus judicial process and the outcome of that process. They also noted several key positive aspects of the on-campus judicial system. Implications for counselors and other professionals who support rape survivors are discussed.

Rape Survivors’ Perceptions of Campus Judicial Systems

A recent nationwide survey of over 4,000 college women found that 3% experience rape or attempted rape each year during college. In addition, these women reported previous incidences of rape (10%) and attempted rape (11%) that along with the 3% bring the proportion up to approximately one in four (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000). Among first-year women, one-third experience some form of sexual assault during their first semester of college; one-quarter of senior women do as well (Humphrey & White, 2000). Findings such as these indicate a widespread and pervasive problem on college campuses—one that is in serious need of devoted attention from a prevention, risk-reduction, victim service, and judicial perspective.

Several studies have connected the use of alcohol to situations where a sexual assault occurs (Abbey, McAuslan, Zawacki, Clinton, & Buck, 2001; Berg, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999; Bernat, Calhoun, & Stolp, 1998; Luddy & Thompson, 1997). Research has shown that college male perpetrators use alcohol more frequently than physical force in rape situations (Finley & Cory, 1993). Most university officials indicate in their sexual assault policies that alcohol consumption hinders a person's ability to consent to sexual activity, and that a person who is mentally incapacitated or physically helpless due to the influence of alcohol cannot consent. Although campus policies may relay a lack of tolerance for sexual assault, some administrative practices tell a different story.

A sexual assault survivor can experience feelings of revictimization whether or not she chooses to report the crime (Silverman, Raj, Mucci, & Hathaway, 2001). If she reports the assault, but college administrators do not take her report seriously and discourage her from taking formal action, she can be left feeling betrayed and alone. If she chooses not to report the assault, the perpetrator escapes accountability and can remain on campus, threatening her safety.

Institutional sexual assault policies and practices also affect respondents, judicial affairs officers, and other student affairs administrators involved in reacting to reports. Students whose friends and classmates have reported or have been accused of sexual assault, future complainants and respondents, and others invested in the reputation of the institution (e.g., alumni, faculty, staff, and trustees) are all likely to encounter the effects of institutional policies. For these reasons, it is important for administrators to carefully design policies and procedures to meet the educational and safety goals of their institutions.

Focus of Inquiry

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe sexual assault survivors' experiences with campus judicial processes by conducting several comparative case studies using a sample of women who survived sexual assault during college. Through extended telephone interviews with female survivors, the authors expected to uncover personal, real-life accounts not yet reported in the sexual assault research literature. Kirsch (1999) explains that a goal of feminist researchers is to pose questions that acknowledge and validate women's experiences and collaborate with participants to foster reciprocity and cooperative interaction; thus, qualitative methods are more easily adaptable to these feminist principles.

The first author and primary investigator conducted all interviews. Case studies of female sexual assault survivors' experiences with their campus judicial systems were used as the unit of analysis in the present study. Case studies are particularly useful for preserving individuality and exploring practical problems where complex issues arise from common events (Merriam, 1998). Although case studies are context-dependent and cannot be confidently generalized, logic by reasoning of analogy allows the researcher to apply the conclusions of a case study to another set of reasonably similar circumstances (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Stake (2000) clarifies, "As a form of research, case study is defined by interest in individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used." (p. 435). The
collective case study technique was used in this research not to generalize findings across all sexual assault cases and survivor experiences, but rather, to explore singular instances of sexual assault reporting and adjudication. Our aim was to pursue and advance knowledge about campus judicial systems that survivors encounter when they attempt to participate in formal resolutions. Case studies allowed the authors to create thick descriptions of the experiences and perceptions of several sexual assault survivors and to interpret these narrative stories in the context of case management practices.

At least two interviews were conducted with each participant. Most participants provided e-mailed documents to supplement their testimonies. All participants were actively engaged in creating their own case studies to the extent that the facts of their cases are accurate portrayals of their experiences, feelings, and reflections. A cross-case analysis exposed themes that emerged from the data and served as a medium for critical interpretation of the collection of case studies.

**Experimenter Bias**

Recognition and acknowledgment of experimenter bias is an essential element to any qualitative study (Olsen, 2000). The primary investigator in the present study is a rape survivor. The secondary investigator is president of a national rape prevention organization. In the recruiting e-mail and during the telephone interviews, the primary investigator disclosed her survivor status with the hope of earning the trust of participants and establishing an empathetic, validating rapport. Her position as a survivor influenced the formulation of open-ended interview questions, follow-up questions, data coding and data analysis. Our goal was to allow participants to give voice to their experiences through the research process and to bring awareness to survivors’ experiences and perceptions concerning on-campus judicial processes and outcomes.

**Participants**

Seven women who were current or former college students from separate institutions across the United States were interviewed. Although this sample size is not generalizable, the stories presented in this manuscript are powerful enough to encourage college administrators and other constituents to take a closer look at how their policies and practices may be affecting survivors at their institutions. The stories can also provide powerful narrative examples to counselors of rape survivors who seek more information on survivors’ experiences. To recruit participants, we sent two emails, approximately two weeks apart, to an electronic listserv sexual assault program coordinators nationwide. These emails explained the focus of the study and requested that they forward this information to potential participants who met several conditions. These conditions included being 18-30 years old, being a current or former college female student who reported a sexual assault to on-campus authorities, who participated in some sort of resolution process (i.e., mediation, judicial hearing, etc.), and who was willing to share their experience through tape-recorded telephone interviews with a graduate student researcher.

The primary investigator responded to e-mail replies, requesting participants’ mailing addresses to send consent forms. Participants provided pseudonyms for the purposes of the study. In this manuscript, only pseudonyms or non-identifiable, broad descriptors of individuals and institutions are revealed to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants and their institutions.

**Methods**

After receiving each participant’s signed consent form in the mail, the first round of telephone interviews was conducted from March to June of 2004. The primary investigator used an interview guide during all interviews to maintain a similar flow of conversation with each participant. During this first interview, participants were asked: a) what institution they attended at the time of the assault, b) to whom they first reported the assault, c) what kind of process they went through, and d) the resolution of that process. Next, participants were questioned regarding their satisfaction with the process and its outcome. They were asked to rate their satisfaction levels on a scale of one to ten, from “least satisfied” to “most satisfied.”

Most stories were quite lengthy and complex. The primary investigator wanted to make sure that the women were able to tell their stories before being questioned any further about how they perceived their experiences. As a result, some first-round interviews ended before satisfaction levels could be assessed. During the second interviews, any remaining questions were posed as well as any new questions that emerged from the first interview. Throughout both interviews, follow-up questions were asked whenever possible to clarify the participants’ stories and to give them opportunities to elaborate on certain details. Immediately following the first interview, tape-recordings were transcribed and summaries of the women’s stories were written. Participants were e-mailed these summaries along with follow-up questions to go over during the second interview. In the e-mail, the authors asked participants to read through the summaries, note any inaccuracies, changes, or omissions that needed to be made, and
either e-mail the authors with this feedback or wait until the second interview to go over the summaries.

Throughout the second interview, participants answered follow-up questions posed. These new tape-recordings were transcribed and used to add more detail and clarity to the original summaries. Once again, these new summaries were e-mailed to participants to review for inaccuracies, changes, or omissions. The authors improved each summary until each participant agreed that it was an accurate portrayal of her experiences with and perceptions of the on-campus judicial system she encountered.

Summaries were formatted in case studies and data was coded in preparation for analysis. Holistic coding strategies, often called “chunking and labeling,” were used. This coding method involves chunking data together and placing meaningful codes on them. This allows the researchers to describe the inter-relationships of the data in their given context (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) and to preserve the individuality of each narrative portrait. As each narrative portrait was coded, themes linking participants’ personal experiences and perceptions immediately began to emerge.

Throughout the study, a system of ‘member-checking’ was used. Specifically, member-checking occurred with each participant at three different times: a) throughout each individual phone interview by asking questions to clarify details of the story, b) after each interview by e-mailing participants summaries of the information they have provided, and c) at the conclusion of the study by e-mailing participants the research results (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). This system led to several cases of feeding participant’s reactions back into the study’s findings.

Cross-Case Analysis

Survivors reported similar thoughts on how they believe college and university administrators should handle sexual assault cases, what kinds of sanctions are most appropriate for policy violations, and the importance of administrative support. The women in this study showed tremendous candor and strength in their story-telling. Not only did they provide a personal account of perhaps the most difficult time in their lives, they also reflected on their satisfaction levels and posed suggestions for policy changes that should be made in the future. Their perceptions clustered around two general themes, four major suggestions for improving judicial policies and practices, and a small number of positive experiences.

Theme 1: Dissatisfaction with the On-campus process.

Each participant rated, on a scale of one (least satisfied) to ten (most satisfied), how satisfied she was with her on-campus process. Participant satisfaction levels ranged from one to eight, with a mean score of 4.0.

Rachel, an 18-year old first-year undergraduate student at an Ivy League institution, rated the process more favorably than the other participants. Throughout most of her process, she felt supported by administrators. This feeling subsided after she discovered that the dean who was in charge of her case neglected to inform her of the sanctions he imposed upon the assailant until several days after sharing this information with the assailant. Still, Rachel reported feeling well-informed at most times. Hillary also reported relatively high satisfaction with the on-campus judicial process. She was a 19-year old college student attending a large, public university in the mid-west at the time she was sexually assaulted. The dean with whom Hillary filed her official report was empathetic and understanding.

Other participants were less satisfied with their experiences. In describing their degree of satisfaction with the on-campus system, the other five women referred to treatment they viewed as insensitive, biased, uninformed, and generally unsupportive by people they encountered throughout the process. These individuals included deans, other staff members, and students.

Participants indicated that administrators and deans caused them the most distress. Marie, an undergraduate Resident Advisor in a large, public institution in the mid-west, said that during her hearing the assailant was inappropriately chatting with hearing panel members and became verbally aggressive toward her. Marie explained, “They were asking him about his classes and making jokes with him. I’m like, you’ve got to be kidding me!” The dean present for her hearing did not intervene and thus failed to provide an impartial hearing environment.

Donna was raped five years ago when she was a 19-year-old first-year student at an all-women’s college in the mid-west. She struggled with administrators and staff members from the time she reported the incident. Administrators asked her to provide numerous statements of the incident and refused to provide her with any official paperwork prior to or during the hearing. In fact, one dean told her that the current football season took precedence over her hearing. In a sarcastic tone, she mentions, “…so I felt pretty confident right away.” Donna reported that senior-level student affairs administrators were overtly and repeatedly rude to her.

Julie was assaulted eight years prior to the interviews, during the first week of classes as a fifth-year student at a large, public university in the mid-west. She filed reports both on and off-campus. Julie expressed wishes that administrators on her campus had been more cooperative with the city police. University officials were reluctant to hand over a piece of
evidence that police officers had requested as part of their criminal investigation. Julie explained that she wished the university would have cooperated with the police department from the very beginning, “because it felt like something else I had to take on – to try to problem solve.”

Chantel, a medical student who experienced an attempted rape in November of her second year, reported that the dean in her case behaved in a manner she found biased toward the assailant. This dean testified against her during the on-campus hearing and convinced the city courts judge to permit the assailant to return to campus after the judge had issued an Emergency Protective Order that prevented the assailant from being on campus.

Liz was a junior and varsity athlete at a highly-selective, medium-sized public institution in the southeast. Her rape occurred in December of her freshman year. Describing her case in more detail helps to illustrate many of the problems expressed by the women in this study. Her case was met with administrative resistance from the start. As she filed her complaint, the Dean of Students attempted to dissuade her from pursuing formal action against the assailant. Liz reported that she needed to convince the dean that the incident had occurred and that she deserved to participate in an on-campus hearing. Liz knew that she did not want to go through a mediation process. In the interview, she asked, “...Why would you ever want to sit in a room with a rapist and talk about it?” Liz told the Dean of Students that she wanted to participate in a sexual assault hearing right away. In response, “she gave me a warning that this is not for punishment or revenge, and if that’s what I was looking for, this was not the way to go about it.” Liz was shocked to hear the dean try to discourage her from proceeding with a hearing, and said that she felt as though the dean was siding with the assailant. She thought, “...Okay, this is the first person who may not believe what I’m saying.”

Although a bit frightened, Liz’s mind was already set on having an official hearing to hold the assailant accountable for his actions. In January, Liz met with another dean who was responsible for coordinating sexual assault hearings. This dean informed her that sexual assault board hearings tend to progress very slowly. At this time, the dean assigned Liz to an advisor from the campus women’s center. According to Liz, the advisor played a very minimal role. Liz says that, “She didn’t really do that much.... I don’t really know what her role was.”

Liz’s hearing lasted for six and a half hours. The panel members found the accused student guilty of violating the university’s sexual assault policy. The sanction they imposed was for the assailant to seek counseling twice a month for issues pertaining to alcohol abuse and decision-making. In addition to counseling, the assailant was banned from the first-year dining hall, fitness center, and first-year residence hall area. He also was forbidden from parking on the road next to Liz’s residence hall and from occupying the same room as she. No other sanctions were imposed. Liz added that the assailant was not a first-year student like she, so these sanctions could not have affected him to any great extent. She continues:

...It was very much I was doing this (sic), that the university wasn’t playing any kind of supporting role... I had to convince [the Dean of Students] to let me go through this process. I felt that a huge burden was put on me—like I was the one who did something wrong, and I had to prove that he actually was the one that did something wrong.

Liz also believes that the minimum sanction imposed on a student found in violation of the institution’s sexual assault policy should be suspension until the survivor graduates. She said “I think it’s harsh, but at the same time, if you’re found guilty of sexual assault, the punishment needs to be harsh.” Liz knows many other women on her campus who have been raped. She claimed that the Dean of Students has a reputation for trying to convince survivors to mediate their cases rather than proceed to official hearings.

Theme 2: Dissatisfaction with the Final Resolution

Participants indicated how satisfied they were with the outcome of their judicial process; the mean response was 2.25, on the same scale of one to ten. Most survivors in this study reported dissatisfaction with the final resolution of the adjudication process. One participant, however, reported positive feelings. Rachel rated her satisfaction with the final resolution a nine. The panel members and dean involved in Rachel’s hearing suspended the assailant and restricted his access to university privileges upon his return. Rachel believed that these were fair sanctions. From her perspective, the university took action to declare that sexual assault is a serious matter and disseminated a message to the campus community that assailants will be severely punished. Although Rachel was very satisfied with the final resolution of her case, others were not.

The primary investigator did not ask Julie about her satisfaction with the final resolution because Julie’s case was not able to be resolved on campus. At the time of her assault, Julie’s assailant had not yet paid his semester tuition; therefore, he was not officially a student of the university and could not participate in a formal adjudication process. The remaining women rated the outcome of their hearing a one.
Marie, Donna, Liz, and Chantel, and Hillary expressed frustration with the resolution of their cases. The panel members in Marie’s hearing dropped the case completely. Shortly after doing so, at least four other women reported that the assailant in Marie’s case had assaulted them as well. Although Donna presented evidence that the assailant had admitted to and apologized for raping her in an on-line conversation, the panelists found him not in violation of the sexual assault policy. In Liz’s case, panel members found the assailant responsible for violating the sexual assault policy, but they decided only to mandate counseling and impose an on-campus restraining order. Chantel’s hearing panel chose to sanction the assailant with academic probation, an educational course, and a restraining order. The presiding officer in Hillary’s hearing decided that the man who raped her had not violated university policy. In his letter explaining this decision, he discounted much of Hillary’s testimony, which left her feeling ignored and invalidated.

The case studies of the women in this investigation consistently demonstrated participant’s perceptions of the failure of university administrators to effectively manage sexual assault cases. Survivors at these institutions report tremendous dissatisfaction with the on-campus process and final resolution. Donna, Liz, and Chantel stood up to administrators who denied them fair treatment; they all walked away feeling extremely frustrated and re-victimized. Marie and Julie felt similarly. Hillary was moderately satisfied with the process but extremely dissatisfied with its final outcome. Only Rachel found satisfaction with the process and closure with the outcome of her hearing. She attributes her satisfaction to supportive administrators as well as the sincerity and sensitivity of the hearing panel members. It was important to her that people treated her with respect and dignity—that they treated her as a person who had been through a traumatic experience, not simply as a component of a case. Had other women experienced this level of empathy from administrators, perhaps they would have reported more satisfaction with their experiences.

Common themes of survivors’ experiences with campus judicial systems support several recommendations for college and university administrators to consider as they evaluate their sexual assault polices and adjudication procedures.

**Recommendation 1: Due Process with Fair and Thoughtful Treatment of Survivors**

Administrators should be careful in their verbal and nonverbal language to affirm the validity of survivors’ perspectives on the incident they are reporting. Caution should be taken to avoid behaviors that are likely to lead survivors to feel as though administrators doubt the veracity of their reports, the purity of their motives, and the credibility of their stories. Survivors in this study repeatedly expressed that they want administrators to behave professionally and to provide a safe, comfortable environment in which to meet. While administrative impartiality is necessary, particularly during an investigatory process, administrators can affirm the emotions behind the facts reported by both parties without taking sides or ostracizing the survivor.

**Recommendation 2: Multiple Reporting Locations and Trained Administrators**

Chantel recommended that students be permitted to file reports of sexual assault at various on-campus locations so that they can choose the site most comfortable to them. Many of the participants in this study reported experiencing a lack of support from various administrators at the time they filed their reports. More than one administrator needs to be trained to aid survivors who seek on-campus judiciary action. In light of the prevalence of campus sexual assault and the large number of cases that go unreported, student affairs administrators should not impede survivors’ wishes to have their cases heard by a judiciary board, either by recommending mediation as a resolution or by dissuading them from filing reports.

**Recommendation 3: Fair and Equal Treatment During a Hearing**

Hearing board members need to be trained to hear cases and to interact appropriately with both parties. Survivor’s stories suggest that current training needs improvement. Sexual assault cases entail sensitive issues and traumatic experiences. All individuals involved in these cases must receive formal logistical and sensitivity training. If the assailant is permitted copies of all relevant documents, then the survivor should be given these same documents. Donna mentioned that during her hearing she, unlike the respondent, was forbidden from bringing in her own witnesses and questioning the assailant and his witnesses. She said, “my character was just as much being scrutinized as his character, so if he’s allowed to have a character witness, then why can’t I as well?” Under this policy, as stated by a senior-level administrator at her institution, a person reporting a sexual assault is treated as a witness to the incident, not as a survivor of it.

Sexual assault policies should not mandate that the survivor and the accused individual remain in the same room during a hearing. The judicial affairs officer should give the survivor the option of facing the accused
during the hearing or retreating, after giving an opening statement, to a separate room equipped with video- or telephone-conferencing devices so that the survivor can watch or hear the judicial proceedings without the added stress of potentially feeling physically unsafe throughout the hearing. Rachel, who experienced this set-up, reported that she “liked that we were in completely different rooms, and I could forget that he was in the other room watching and feel like I was safer to say what I wanted to say.”

Others have suggested that administrators should separate the survivor and perpetrator throughout the hearing. Student-protestors at Bates College, for example, demanded that administrators change their sexual assault policy so that survivors do not have to face the accused individual during judicial hearings (Haworth, 1998). Rachel’s hearing involved video-conferencing devices that enabled her to “feel like I was safer to say what I wanted to say.” Of course, not all institutions have the financial resources to supply video-conferencing equipment; telephone-conferencing can be a less expensive but still functional option.

At the very least, security officers need to be stationed inside the hearing room for protection. A sexual assault survivor, most likely, will feel unsafe and uncomfortable occupying the same room as the accused individual, especially during exceptionally long hearings. Offering her various safety options may help to reduce her anxiety and fear of facing the accused.

**Recommendation 4: Sanctions Demonstrating Zero-Tolerance**

Participants noted that revoking housing privileges, Greek membership, athletic team membership, or mandating community service do not serve as appropriately severe sanctions for sexual assault. Lenient sanctions send the message that sexual assault is not a serious violation of college policy. These types of sanctions also may cause survivors to drop out of college or transfer to other institutions where they are less at-risk for running into their assailants on campus.

Judiciary sanctions send messages to the campus community concerning what behavior is tolerated and what is not. From the limited sample used in this study, it seems that college and university systems that expel students found in violation of the sexual assault policy seem to be the exception, rather than the rule. Although expulsion would seem to be the most appropriate punishment for a campus rapist, because it is the most severe sanction that a college or university can impose, many do not use this option. In this study, suspension was the most severe sanction imposed, and yet many hearing boards choose only to punish rapists with mandatory counseling sessions and restrictions on where they can walk on campus. Liz suggests a minimum sanction of suspension until the survivor graduates. Student affairs administrators must examine their sanctioning histories, determine what messages they want the campus community to receive about policy violations, and make future sanctioning decisions based on these messages, rather than past practices.

In court, a person found guilty of rape is sentenced to time in prison. The on-campus judicial system must recognize expulsion as a severe yet fair sanction for one who commits sexual assault. Expelling a sexual assault perpetrator benefits the campus community. Survivors should have a right to complete their education in an environment in which they feel safe. Quite reasonably, the only way to protect members of the campus community is to expel anyone found responsible for violating the institution’s sexual assault policy. Many participants indicated that their assailants were multiple offenders yet none were expelled for their actions. Having lenient sanctions for multiple offenders is especially deplorable. Administrators must consider the messages that their case management practices are sending to students.

Other suggestions for improving sexual assault case management include increased anonymity and protection from the media and readily available information for students seeking knowledge about how sexual assault hearings are conducted. The survivors in this study serve as informed users of the on-campus judicial systems at their institutions. Their recommendations for policy changes are derived from these experiences. It is vital to the safety of the student population that administrators consider these recommendations and work toward improving the policies and practices of their own campuses.

**Positive Experiences**

One of the most challenging questions participants answered concerned their positive experiences with the on-campus judicial process. For six of the women interviewed, this task was daunting. Their negative experiences heavily outweighed the positive. Rachel, a first-year student and one of the two participants to report a relatively positive experience with the system at her institution, finished her adjudication process only a few weeks before her first interview for this study. She was relieved that the assailant was suspended for a few months. Although she expressed frustration with the dean who forgot to tell her the sanctions he imposed, she casually commented, “They did what they needed to do, they just didn’t think about me at all.”
The fact that her hearing ended less than a month before the interviews can explain a portion of Rachel's positive attitude about the process and outcome of her hearing. Most of the other women who participated in this study had at least two years to reflect on their experiences and develop perspective about their institution's response. Many of them had formed advocate-like relationships with other survivors, participated in community education programs, and served as activists in the fight against sexual violence and for institutional policy reform. These women had formed their perceptions and opinions over two, five, or eight years. Their experiences over this time may have given them a greater sense of perspective about the process they went through and its outcome.

Rachel also reported positive experience with the video-conferencing system during her hearing as well as support from staff members in the women's center. Other survivors mentioned a supportive female police officer and a college administrator, a respectful contact person, a helpful lawyer, and accommodating faculty members. Most participants were able only to cite one or two empathetic administrators.

Limitations

The small sample size used in this study was intentional and is common among case study research (Stake, 2000). The personal narratives presented in this study do not represent all female sexual assault survivors' stories and all college and university officials' responses to sexual assault case reports and hearings. Although the primary investigator's experience with sexual assault and on-campus adjudication allowed her to build trusting relationships with participants, the lens through which she interviewed them and analyzed the data may have prevented her from remaining objective. Subjectivity, though, always manages to enter into qualitative research. As Kirsch (1999) noted,

Reflective accounts of research are important because they remind readers that scholars are always products of their culture and history, that observations are always limited and partial, that interpretations are complex and contradictory, and that all accounts of research are open to revision and interpretation. (p. 82)

Qualitative research methods enable investigators to explore open-ended research questions that cannot be examined empirically and to analyze and interpret their data in a meaningful way, provided that they recognize their limitations in doing so.

Also, participants were recruited through an electronic listserv of sexual assault program coordinators, who ultimately controlled who responded to the authors' request for participation. These program coordinators often serve as advocates for survivors on their campuses. As a result of their professional positions, sexual assault advocates may have more frequent and long-term contact with survivors who acknowledge negative experiences with than with those who report more positive ones. Thus, for this study, participant recruitment may have been biased.

Future research could take the results of this inquiry in several directions. A larger sample of participants from more institutions would help to establish these preliminary themes as potentially generalizable findings, particularly if quantitative methods were used. A large-scale survey of survivor's ratings of their experiences with campus judicial systems would help clarify whether the results of this manuscript were representative of the broader population. Additional research could also look at samples of survivors at different time frames after a hearing (shortly after, 1 year out, and 5 years out) to determine how survivors change, or do not change, their perceptions of the hearing in which they took part.

Conclusions

The women in this study explicitly said that they wanted their voices to be heard. After analyzing the data, it was evident that although they all were clearly affected by both the assault and the aftermath of the assault, they seemed to be eager to tell their stories for the purposes of changing the unjust and re-victimizing norms found in the culture of many institutional adjudication practices. They have come forward with their stories so that college administrators and other policy-makers will take a closer look at their own sexual assault case management practices and consider how these practices ultimately affect students and others involved. Survivor's observations about their experiences navigating judicial systems also provide useful information to counselors who can better prepare and support such women through these complex judicial processes with a more well-informed knowledge of the difficulties survivors are likely to incur when filing campus charges.

In an ideal world, sexual assault and rape would not exist. Activists of the anti-sexual violence movement would agree that this is the ultimate goal (Foubert, 2005). Until then, college and university officials must repeatedly ask how they can improve their sexual assault policies and case management practices. Katie Koestner (2000), an activist and survivor of sexual assault, wrote:

There is no school without rape, no matter how Catholic or Mormon, no matter how liberal or conservative, no matter how rural, no matter how few students are enrolled... Those schools that think they are doing 'everything possible' are as vulnerable as
the woman who thinks that she is smart and responsible and will never be raped. (p. 38)
Administrators in higher education institutions would be wise to carefully consider how they can improve their sexual assault adjudication practices and thus create a more safe, secure learning environment for all students.

References


