



# CRIME VICTIMS' INSTITUTE

COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY

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## Sexual Victimization Experiences Among Undergraduates and their Help-Seeking Behaviors

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In its most recent data available, the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey estimated that nearly 44% of adult women and 25% of adult men experienced some form of sexual violence, with roughly 21% of adult women and 3% of adult men indicating an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime (Smith et al., 2018).[i] Among these persons, the most significant risk group for rape and sexual assault is college-aged women (aged 18 to 24) (Sinozich & Langton, 2014). However, while sexual victimization within the campus community is not as prevalent as in the general population, formal service utilization by student victims is much lower than that of the general public (Sinozich & Langton, 2014; Stoner & Cramer, 2019).[ii] Although all types of criminal behavior have some degree of nonreporting, it has been understood that sexual victimizations (e.g., rape, sexual assault) are routinely underreported compared to other violent crimes (Morgan & Truman, 2020). Therefore, identifying the barriers for these victims to report at one institution within Texas and/or connect with an on- or off-campus resource is of significant interest.

Research has utilized instruments to gauge specific forms of unwanted sexual experiences, notably the Sexual Experience Survey—Short Form Victimization (SES-SFV), created in 2007 by Mary Koss, one of the leading scholars in gender-based violence, together with her colleagues. Subsequent research has regularly used this instrument to measure unwanted sexual experiences among students, ranging from one-fifth to one-third (22% - 33%) of students indicating at least one form (e.g., sexualized touching) (Anderson et al., 2018; Holland, 2020; Holland et al., 2021; Holland & Cortina, 2017; Mellins et al., 2017).

Although the unwanted sexual experiences of undergraduate men have not been equivalently explored—one gap this research intends to fill—what is clear is that when gender comparisons are available, undergraduate women reported a greater degree of unwanted sexual experiences (Mellins et al., 2017). Given previous research on adverse sexual experiences among undergraduates, we develop two hypotheses as follows:

*H1.* Undergraduate women will indicate a greater degree of unwanted sexual experiences than undergraduate men.

*H2.* Undergraduate women will indicate a greater degree of being raped than undergraduate men.

### Experiences with Help-Seeking among Victims of Sexual Violence

Although much of the empirical focus has been on ascertaining the rates of sexual victimization, there lacks a similar depth of research into the help-seeking behaviors of students. One systematic review of publications found that student service utilization for sexual violence ranged from 5% to 58% (Stoner & Cramer, 2019). The help-seeking literature has identified two paths for which students can seek services: informal and formal. Although there is some variation across studies, formal resources typically include law enforcement (or campus police), counselors/therapists, and religious leaders, with student-specific institutions being campus counseling centers, housing staff, student health centers, and Title IX offices (Ahrens et al., 2007; Campbell et al., 2001; Cantor et al., 2019; Holland, 2020; Holland et al., 2021; McGraw & Tyler, 2021; Richardson et al., 2015; Stoner & Cramer, 2019). Informal sources are friends, family, intimate partners, and roommates (Ahrens et al., 2007; McGraw & Tyler, 2021; Richardson et al., 2015).

[i] Numbers in the main text were rounded to the nearest tenth.

[ii] There is no substantial empirical discussion to suggest a term preference by victims or survivors of sexual victimization, as detailed in Boyle and Rogers (2020). Lacking in this identity politics debate toward either term for sexual victimization is an intersectional dialogue. The victim or survivor identity may ebb and flow over (cultural) context and time, with consideration that agency may be disabled, particularly among those who do not yet view or will ever view themselves as survivors, as well as unanswerable questions such as how to operationalize survivor (Karmen, 2020). These complications, among other unnamed ones, influenced the chosen term for this written product to be victim. However, as culture and language are organic, the authors implore that future scholarship adds to this developing discussion in understanding public attitudes and their heuristics when employing either term.

# Sexual Victimization Experiences Among Undergraduates and their Help-Seeking Behaviors

Informal disclosure of sexual victimization occurs more often than utilization of formal resources (Ahrens et al., 2007; Holland & Cortina, 2017; McGraw & Tyler, 2021; Orchowski et al., 2009). Although the degree of informal disclosures among undergraduates is not widely known—another gap this research intends to fill—one study found that nearly 75% of the first disclosures among the general public were informal, with some having never disclosed (Ahrens et al., 2007). Conversely, the underutilization of formal resources is evidenced by the NCVS data that found that 20% of students (aged 18 to 24) had reported to the police versus 33% of non-students within the same age group between 1995-2013 (Sinozich & Langton, 2014). In support, a nationwide campus survey measuring sexual victimization showed that campus or local police were contacted by roughly ten percent of the sampled students, however, nearly half sought counseling after victimization (Cantor et al., 2019).

Differences in help-seeking behaviors are predicated on various characteristics of the victims and the context of the assault. Foremost of those differences are the informal and formal reporting patterns between gender, with men consistently less likely to share their victimization in either avenue for support (Cantor et al., 2019; McGraw & Tyler, 2021; Pino & Meier, 1999)—most research has focused on the help-seeking behaviors of women rather than men. This theme of underreporting of sexual victimization by men is pervasive, with 1979-1987 data from the NCVS finding that women were one and a half times more likely to report rape to police than men (Pino & Meier, 1999), a considerable phenomenon as formal reporting by women is also uncommon (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011). Less consistent than gender and underdiscussed are the formal help-seeking behaviors among sexual minorities (McGraw & Tyler, 2021; Richardson et al., 2015). Even fewer studies explored the help-seeking behaviors of Greek members, with one study finding that no effect was identified (McGraw & Tyler, 2021). Likewise, the effects of risky behaviors are infrequently assessed, with hooking up and substance use not predictive of formal service utilization or informal disclosure among undergraduates; however, binge drinking demonstrated decreased disclosure to informal support systems. Finally, scholars have strongly suggested future research to look at how sexual assault histories influenced service usage, with studies indicating that those with a history of sexual assault are less likely to report versus those without a history (Orchowski et al., 2009; Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011). Given previous research on profiling the characteristics of students who use informal and formal support systems, we develop the hypothesis as follows:

*H3.* Undergraduate women who reported being raped are more likely to informally disclose than undergraduate men.

*H4.* Undergraduate women who reported being raped are more likely to formally disclose than undergraduate men.

*H5.* There will be uneven distributions across demographic, social, and sexually experiential (i.e., unwanted sexual experiences, rape) factors for undergraduate women who formally report a rape. For example, undergraduates with histories of unwanted sexual experiences will more often formally report than those without such histories.

## Methods

Participant recruitment began with constructing a sampling frame of Fall 2021 course offerings at one public university in the southern US region (N = 4,016). Course information included the course name, department of origin, course number, section number, credit hours allotted, the instructor on record, course site, enrollment count, and course attributes (e.g., core course, distance learning). Inclusion criteria for the sampling frame of courses included face-to-face lectures taught on the main campus and exceeded 11 undergraduates (N = 1,367)

The instructors on record were contacted via encrypted email to gauge interest. Instructors were given three options for participant recruitment to distribute the web survey: 1) an assignment tab or 2) an announcement within their learning management software system via IT intervention, or 3) the instructor could directly email students a survey link. Instructors were informed that they could discretionally award extra credit, with each respondent able to enter into a raffle for a \$50 electronic gift card upon survey completion. Potential respondents were informed that the survey would take roughly 25 minutes to complete, which contained 112-156 questions (dependent on responses to filter questions).

The survey ran in two one-month waves from mid-October to mid-December 2021. Initial contact with instructors occurred one week before the survey was to start, with follow-up emails sent two days prior to the start of the survey. Each wave involved contact with 80 instructors. In the first wave, systematic random sampling drove the sampling procedure. The response rate by instructors and students was 14% and 44%, respectively. A second wave targeted undergraduate classes that exceeded 50 students. An instructor and student response rate of 39% and 37% was achieved, respectively. A total of 1,350 students responded to the survey request—a 39% response rate, which is above the expected range for a web-based survey (Nulty, 2008)—with a final sample of 1,067 undergraduates. [iii]

[iii] Of those, 283 were ineligible: 13 students did not consent to the survey, 176 had previously taken the survey, and 94 students had not fully completed and submitted the survey, with three students identifying as a graduate or a non-specified undergraduate student.

# Sexual Victimization Experiences Among Undergraduates and their Help-Seeking Behaviors

## Variables

### *Demographics and Social Characteristics*

The undergraduates were queried on a range of demographic and social characteristics (Table 1). *Age* was presented as a sliding scale ranging from 18 to 100. Undergraduates were asked to indicate their *grade level* (freshmen = 0, seniors = 3). *Gender* was coded as 0 = man and 1 = woman. *Race* was coded as 0 = undergraduates not identifying as White only and 1 = White only. Undergraduates who identified their origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be of any race, and those who classified themselves as one of the four *Hispanic/Latino* categories (Mexican/Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin) were coded as 1, and undergraduates who did not identify as Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin coded as 0. *Sexual orientation* was coded as 0 = LGBQIA+ (as classified by asexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, queer, or other) and 1 = heterosexual/straight. Finally, experiences with attending any form of *sexual assault programming* (e.g., bystander intervention programming) at the university of study were coded as 0 = no and 1 = yes.

Three queries focused on the social characteristics of undergraduates. *Greek affiliated* was coded as 0 = not Greek affiliated and 1 = Greek affiliated. *Living arrangement* was coded as 0 = on campus and 1 = off campus. Undergraduates self-reported the number of times they consumed five or more (if a man) or four or more (if a woman) alcoholic drinks on a single occasion in the past 30 days and coded as an ordinal variable ranging from 0 to 5 or more drinks to measure *alcohol consumption* (see National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2022). Likewise, undergraduates self-reported the number of times they *hooked up* with someone in the past year with whom they were not in a relationship and coded it as an ordinal variable ranging from 0 to 5 or more.

### *Sexual Experience Survey*

The Sexual Experience Survey—Short Form Victimization (SES-SFV) measured seven types of self-reported unwanted sexual experiences—unwanted sexual contact and attempted and completed oral, vaginal, and anal assault—containing five specific perpetrator tactics resulting in 35 total items of assaultive behaviors (Koss et al., 2007). The two anal (attempted and completed) assault questions were modified so that only the vaginal assault (attempted and completed) questions remained gender-specific. Respondents indicated if they had experienced any unwanted sexual experiences in the past 12 months and since the age of 14 from the date of self-administering the survey instead of the number of times each assaultive behavior occurred given its limited utility on students who are men (Anderson et al., 2018; see Holland & Cortina, 2017), so these experiences were dichotomously coded as no = 0 and yes = 1. The last question of the SES-SFV asked respondents to indicate whether they had ever experienced rape, dichotomously coded as no = 0 and yes = 1.

### *Help-Seeking Behaviors*

Respondents were asked whether they informally and formally (on- and off-campus) disclosed the rape if it happened at the university. They were to indicate whether the type of informal support system for the rape incident while attending university was a family member, friend, significant other, or someone else they could list in the blank space provided or no one. If students responded in the affirmative on informing one of the three support systems, they were filtered to indicate how many people they had told about the incident.

Next, students were queried whether they had formally reported the rape incident. Students were provided six reasons why they had not formally reported, which were presented in the following order: 1) the incident was not serious, 2) they did not want to get the perpetrator in trouble, 3) they did not want to disclose the incident, 4) they did not consider the incident as a rape, 5) that they would be disbelieved, and 6) uncomfortable with reporting. A space was provided so students could include other reasons why they chose not to report the rape incident formally.

Finally, students were asked about their help-seeking behaviors to the utilization of on- and off-campus resources. Students were asked to indicate which of the following nine types of on-campus resources were sought related to addressing the rape incident: 1) campus police, 2) counseling center, 3) diversity and inclusivity office, 4) health clinic, 5) Title IX office, 6) university faculty, 7) university housing, 8) university staff, and 9) victim advocate. A space was provided so students could include other on-campus resources not listed and an opportunity to mark that no on-campus resource was used. Students were then asked whether they sought off-campus services (response option: yes or no), and if answered in the affirmative, to indicate the off-campus service. Following each inquiry about using on- and off-campus resources was whether the interaction with the on- or off-campus resource was a positive or negative experience.

# Sexual Victimization Experiences Among Undergraduates and their Help-Seeking Behaviors

## Participants

Table 1 shows the demographic and social characteristics of all undergraduate respondents. The undergraduates' mean age was 20.41, with the majority aged 18 to 24 (95%). Respondents varied by near proportional groups via grade level, freshmen (20%), sophomores (30%), juniors (27%), and seniors (24%). Although the sample of respondents is overrepresented by women (71%), in comparison to the institution's population of undergraduate women (64%), this pattern of undergraduate men not responding to surveys is a consistent theme in the related research (Cantor et al., 2019; McGraw & Tyler, 2021; Mellins et al., 2017; Richardson et al., 2015). Most undergraduates identified as White only (64%), with the remaining undergraduates identifying with a racial mixture that was not White only (36%). One-third of the sample (35%) identified with a Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. The majority of undergraduates identified as heterosexual (75%) and indicated having attended some form of sexual assault prevention programming (e.g., bystander intervention programming) at the university of study (74%). Socially, most undergraduates were not Greek affiliated (91%), resided off-campus (71%), and had not engaged in heavy drinking in the past month (52%) or hook-ups in the past year (69%).

Table 1. Demographic and Social Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	N	(%)
Age ( <i>M, SD</i> )	20.41	2.60
Grade Level		
Freshman	208	(19.55)
Sophomore	315	(29.61)
Junior	290	(27.26)
Senior	251	(23.59)
Gender		
Women	753	(70.84)
Men	287	(27.00)
Race		
White Only	665	(64.44)
Identifying not as White	368	(35.56)
Hispanic/Latino		
Yes	368	(65.22)
No	690	(34.78)
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	790	(74.53)
LGBQIA+	270	(25.47)
Sexual Assault Programming		
Yes	278	(73.90)
No	787	(26.10)
Greek		
Yes	97	(9.12)
No	967	(90.88)
Living Arrangement		
On-Campus	307	(28.83)
Off-Campus	758	(71.17)
Number of Times More than 4 (woman) or 5 (man) Alcoholic Drinks were Consumed in the Past Month		
0 Times	544	(52.21)
1 Time	147	(14.11)
2 Times	112	(10.75)
3 Times	68	(6.53)
4 Times	58	(5.57)
5+ Times	113	(10.84)
Number of Hook-Ups		
0 Times	705	(68.65)
1 Time	83	(8.08)
2 Times	67	(6.52)
3 Times	44	(4.28)
4 Times	29	(2.82)
5+ Times	99	(9.64)

# Sexual Victimization Experiences Among Undergraduates and their Help-Seeking Behaviors

## Data Analysis

A series of analyses were conducted using SPSS version 25 to the study's hypotheses. First, descriptions of all study variables were computed, including the characteristics of the respondents and their help-seeking behaviors. Second, cross-tabulations were run to explore gender comparisons of respondents who reported unwanted sexual experiences and rape since they were 14 and in the past year and the help-seeking behaviors of undergraduate women who formally reported rape.

## Results

### *Prevalence of Unwanted Sexual Experiences and Rape*

Table 2 shows that nearly one-quarter of the respondents (25%,  $n = 225$ ) experienced unwanted touching or attempted or completed penetrative oral, anal, or vaginal sexual assault in the past 12 months. These unwanted sexual experiences during adolescence from the age of 14 were indicated by 42% ( $n = 368$ ) of the respondents. Undergraduate men statistically indicated fewer unwanted sexual experiences in the past 12 months ( $p < .001$ ) and since the age of 14 ( $p < .001$ ) than undergraduate women.

The gender differences continue with the indication of specific attempted and completed assaultive behaviors experienced in the past 12 months and since the age of 14, aside from attempted or completed vaginal penetration. Undergraduate women are statistically more likely to have indicated being a victim of unwanted touches in the past 12 months ( $p < .001$ ) and since age 14 ( $p < .001$ ) than undergraduate men. Similarly, undergraduate women are statistically more likely to have indicated being a victim of attempted oral sex in the past 12 months ( $p < .001$ ) and attempted ( $p < .001$ ) and completed oral sex ( $p < .001$ ) since the age of 14 than undergraduate men, with the gender gap narrowing when indicating unwanted completed oral sexual assault in the past 12 months ( $p < .05$ ). Finally, there is no statistical gender difference on experiencing attempted or completed penetrative anal sexual assault in the past 12 months; however, undergraduate women indicated having experienced a higher rate of this form of assaultive behavior since the age of 14.

Next, one-in-six respondents (17%) shared having acknowledged a rape in their lifetime. The gender gap in experiencing sexual victimization continues, with twice as many undergraduate women (20%) more likely to share that they had been raped than undergraduate men (9%). Overall, these descriptive and inferential statistics support H1 and H2; undergraduate women are more likely to indicate a greater degree of unwanted sexual experiences and rape than undergraduate men.

### *Characteristics Associated with Informal and Formal Disclosure*

Undergraduates were then questioned about their help-seeking behaviors regarding a rape that occurred while on campus (see Table 3). Rape victims more often informally disclosed to someone (60%) than no one, with no gender difference (men: 58%, women: 61%, data not shown in Table 3); thus, H3 was not supported. Usually, the incident was disclosed to a wide range of people, from one to more than five people, with most having told more than five people (30%, data not shown in Table 3).

Conversely, not one undergraduate identifying as a man had formally reported, and every tenth woman undergraduate (10%, data not shown in Table 3) formally reported the rape incident. Thus, H4 is partially supported, but the difference is not statistically significant. Undergraduates were provided a list of reasons why they had not formally reported (data not shown in Table 3); nearly one-third (29%) marked at least one reason, with over one-half having marked two reasons (57%), and the majority of the sample (81%) having marked a combination of three reasons. In ranked order, from most common to least, undergraduates indicated that reporting would have made them uncomfortable, closely followed by not knowing the incident was considered rape, an unwillingness to report to a formal resource, with few indicating that they did not want to get the perpetrator in trouble and felt the incident not serious. In addition to marking the listed reasons, respondents who opted to type in the blank space provided a range of reasons, with common themes being fear (often of retaliation by the perpetrator or the perpetrator's family), discovery by friends and family, the presence of alcohol was involved (whether voluntarily or involuntarily consumed), lack of evidence, nothing would come from a formal report, and re-traumatization.

Next, inferential analyses were computed to show group differences across each demographic, social, and sexually experiential characteristic of undergraduate women who had not formally reported a rape that occurred while on campus. Findings show that no one demographic, social, or sexually experiential characteristic of undergraduate women is more likely to report formally. Although this outcome is possibly due to the low sample size, inferences of the data should be cautioned, but it does suggest that H5 is not supported (data not shown in Table 3).

Finally, undergraduates indicated whether they connected with on- or off-campus resources for the rape that occurred while on campus. Undergraduates more often sought an off-campus resource (21%)—almost always a mental health specialist—than an on-campus resource (14%), with a greater proportion indicating positive experiences (data not shown in Table 3) with off-campus resources (91%) than on-campus resources (77%).

# Sexual Victimization Experiences Among Undergraduates and their Help-Seeking Behaviors

**Table 2. Respondents Who Revealed Unwanted Sexual Experiences and Rape (%)**

Variables	Overall	Men	Women
	Past 12 Months (since age 14)	Past 12 Months (since age 14)	Past 12 months (since age 14)
<b>Any Unwanted Sexual Experience</b>			
Yes	24.64 (42.06)	11.45 (20.63)	29.95 (50.72)
No	75.36 (57.94)	88.55 (79.37)	70.05 (49.28)
<b>Victim of Touch</b>			
Yes	21.05 (38.99)	9.88 <sup>a</sup> (19.67) <sup>a</sup>	25.56 (46.69)
No	78.95 (61.01)	90.12 (80.33)	74.44 (53.31)
<b>Victim of Oral Sex</b>			
Yes	8.46 (18.25)	5.08 <sup>c</sup> (8.30) <sup>a</sup>	9.84 (22.13)
No	91.54 (81.75)	94.92 (91.70)	90.16 (77.87)
<b>Victim of Attempted Oral Sex</b>			
Yes	12.78 (21.32)	5.43 <sup>a</sup> (8.30) <sup>a</sup>	15.84 (26.64)
No	87.22 (78.68)	94.57 (91.70)	84.16 (73.36)
<b>Victim of Anal Penetration</b>			
Yes	6.73 (8.92)	4.26 (4.94) <sup>c</sup>	7.75 (10.39)
No	93.27 (91.08)	95.74 (95.06)	92.25 (89.61)
<b>Victim of Attempted Anal Penetration</b>			
Yes	4.42 (8.58)	3.11 (4.51) <sup>b</sup>	4.96 (10.27)
No	95.58 (91.42)	96.89 (95.49)	95.04 (89.73)
<b>Victim of Vaginal Penetration</b>			
Yes	—	—	13.73 (26.35)
No	—	—	86.27 (73.65)
<b>Victim of Attempted Vaginal Sex</b>			
Yes	—	—	13.46 (26.96)
No	—	—	86.54 (73.04)
<b>Rape</b>			
Yes	16.86	8.65 <sup>a</sup>	20.03
No	83.14	91.35	79.97

\*Note. <sup>a</sup> =  $p < .001$ . <sup>b</sup> =  $p < .01$ . <sup>c</sup> =  $p < .05$ .

**Table 3. Helping-Seeking Behaviors of Rape Victims**

Variables	N	%
<b>Informal Disclosure</b>		
No One	43	39.81
Someone	65	60.19
<b>Formal Disclosure</b>		
Yes	15	8.88
No	154	91.12
<b>Connected with On-Campus Resource</b>		
Yes	21	13.73
No	132	86.27
<b>Connected with Off-Campus Resource</b>		
Yes	35	20.83
No	133	79.17

# Sexual Victimization Experiences Among Undergraduates and their Help-Seeking Behaviors

## Discussion

Understanding the aversion of students to formally reporting can enable institutions to work toward bridging the gap to facilitate support more effectively for undergraduates who may be in need. As the data demonstrated, despite national efforts, sexual assault and rape victims underutilize formal campus resources, which Holland and Cortina (2017) argued are due to community norms and institutional policies; instead, this data from one university shows undergraduates are reliant on informal support systems. No undergraduate man formally reported the rape that occurred while on campus, with few undergraduate women engaging in a formal report. Moreover, few undergraduates connected with on- or off-campus resources, with off-campus resources (i.e., counselors) being more positively perceived than on-campus resources. Finally, the profile of an undergraduate who is a woman and had not formally reported cannot be discerned by any demographic, social, or sexually experiential factor, suggesting that institutions should continue engaging in a campus-wide effort about what formal reporting looks like for undergraduates.

Although self-reports of sexual victimization (as with most of the research referenced in this work) are one limitation of the current data, the use of the SES-SFV was intentional as it can elicit the recall of subtle unwanted sexual experiences more accurately (Koss et al., 2007). In support, respondents are more truthful to surveys than friends about unwanted sexual experiences (Orchowski et al., 2009). Moreover, content validity was achieved as the current data's findings on unwanted sexual experiences and rape correspond with prior research (Anderson et al., 2018; Holland, 2020; Holland et al., 2021; Holland & Cortina, 2017; Mellins et al., 2017; Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011). Investigations only considering vaginal penetration obscure the nuances of sexual victimization and neglect those perpetrated against men. Overall, one key contribution of the data is that the SES-SFV found that undergraduates experienced a range of assaultive behaviors. Another contribution is the furthering use of the updated SES-SFV when assessing undergraduate men, identifying anywhere from 5% to 10% who indicated a specific form of unwanted sexual experience in the past year (Anderson et al., 2018; Mellins et al., 2017) versus undergraduate women who indicated around 5% to 26% in the past year. Further, our data supported the gender disparity in experiencing an acknowledged rape, with one-in-five undergraduate women (20%) and one-in-ten undergraduate men (9%) having ever been raped. It should be recognized that a gendered difference in identifying as having been raped may be an artifact of women coming to terms with and labeling the incident as rape more often than men (Holland & Cortina, 2017).

We add to the empirical research of undergraduates often relying on informal support systems rather than formal resources (McGraw & Tyler, 2021; Richardson et al., 2015). Remarkably, there is no gender difference in informally disclosing a rape that occurred while on campus. Moreover, no undergraduate man formally reported the rape (McGraw & Tyler, 2021, found otherwise). On- and off-campus resources continue to be underutilized by undergraduates (Cantor et al., 2019; Holland et al., 2021; McGraw & Tyler, 2021; Richardson et al., 2015; Stoner & Cramer, 2019), with counseling being the most popular on- and off-campus resource, with off-campus more often generating positive feelings (see Ahrens et al., 2007).

Although limited in its generalizability as the data is from one university, our findings lend themselves to several avenues for implications. Empirically, even with greater racial and ethnic diversity than is typical among the cited literature, our results support prior research that there are no distinct racial or ethnic patterns in sexual assault experiences (Mellins et al., 2017, except for Asian students) and help-seeking behaviors (McGraw & Tyler, 2021). Studies should continue to investigate the sexual victimization experiences of men and gender and sexual minority students, emphasizing their help-seeking behaviors. Qualitative research can explore, in addition to students who are women, the perceived barriers to (informally and) formally disclosing to and connecting with campus agencies, particularly since undergraduates who tend to disclose informally and formally have greater post-traumatic symptoms (McGraw & Tyler, 2021).

Discord between the victim's goals and institutions may explain why victims of sexual victimization are not reaching out to formal resources (Holland & Cortina, 2017). Broadly, the barriers to students informally or formally revealing their sexual victimization rest on the anticipated psychological harms and the contextual factors of the assault. Generally speaking, as to why they had not reported the incident, victims anticipated negative emotions such as shame, guilt, and embarrassment, with concerns about the discovery by friends and family (Cantor et al., 2019; Patterson et al., 2009; Stoner & Cramer, 2019). Victims routinely minimized the assaultive behavior and its impact, regarding the assault as not serious or important enough to exert time to report, especially if the rape did not align with stereotypical perceptions of rape, such as sustaining an injury, the presence of a weapon, or whether the perpetrator was a stranger (Holland et al., 2021; Holland & Cortina, 2017; Patterson et al., 2009; Pino & Meier, 1999; Richardson et al., 2015; Sinozich & Langton, 2014; Stoner & Cramer, 2019).

# Sexual Victimization Experiences Among Undergraduates and their Help-Seeking Behaviors

To this end, victims were self-confident in handling the situation (Cantor et al., 2019; Holland & Cortina, 2017) while also engaging in self-protective behaviors of the anticipated negative consequences that may generate stress or revictimization if they engage with formal resources (Ahrens et al., 2007; Campbell et al., 2001; Patterson et al., 2009). Several of these concerns parallel secondary victimization, where individuals have negative experiences relating to disclosure, further aggravating their experience and inhibiting their ability to cope (Campbell et al., 2001; Patterson, 2011). A closely linked concept of secondary victimization is institutional betrayal, and in relation to college campuses, these institutions are in a position that can generate distrust among students regarding how they respond to formal reports (Smith & Freyd, 2014).

However, these findings should not be misinterpreted as Sisyphean. Sexual assault programming should not be limited to knowledge of resources as they are not merely enough to encourage the utilization of campus services (Stoner & Cramer, 2019). Therefore, if not already, institutions should deliver various discourses on the types of sexual assaultive behaviors and rape to validate victims' experiences. Social marketing is one powerful tool that can transform campus conversations about the misperceptions of rape and build a positive image of these formal resources (Holland et al., 2021; Patterson et al., 2009). In conjunction with generating awareness of campus resources for victims, institutions can outline a step-by-step process of the procedures taken before and after a formal report that also emphasizes confidentiality and common emotions that occur throughout the help-seeking process. As evidenced by research on the help-seeking behaviors of community members, the reasons for disclosure were to seek help (primarily for emotional support), with the feeling of comfort being the most common descriptor as to how the victim felt following a healthy disclosure, followed by feelings of being supported and unburdened (Ahrens et al., 2007). Therefore, formal resources do not have to be integrally involved in each sexual victimization, risking nonreporting behaviors among students via institutional betrayal, possibly creating a culture of nonreporting (Smith & Freyd, 2014). Instead, institutions should consider aligning with the more popular informal reporting behaviors of undergraduates, and in this way, they are arguably student-centered. They can facilitate conversations between informal support systems by educating the campus body about the reporting processes, as they can serve as conduits to formal resources when needed (Holland, 2020; Stoner & Cramer, 2019), and in this way, perhaps demonstrate themselves as a resource that can be valuable to those who decide to formally report sexual victimization.

# Sexual Victimization Experiences Among Undergraduates and their Help-Seeking Behaviors

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