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Campus-Based Sexual Assault: The #MeToo Movement and Students' Understanding of Issues Around Consent

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CAMPUS-BASED SEXUAL ASSAULT: THE #MeToo MOVEMENT AND
STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF ISSUES AROUND CONSENT

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

College students who have experienced sexual assault are at higher risk for negative impacts involving physical and mental health. In addition, appropriate resources and positive systematic response to disclosure are pivotal in the recovery process of survivors. Empirically relevant research has focused on campus-based sexual assault and interrelationships among variables surrounding students' attitudes towards explicit sexual consent. This cross-sectional descriptive study of 110 students enrolled in two freshman sociology classes contributes to the emerging body of research regarding the use of social media platforms to raise awareness of sexual assault by examining students' sociodemographic characteristics, literacy using technology, rape myth acceptance, attitudes towards women, hypermasculinity, and their relationship to knowledge of the #MeToo social media campaign. The current study is the first known to explore college students' knowledge of #MeToo and any possible correlation to understanding issues around consent. Directions for future implications of social work research, practice, and policy are discussed.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Campus-based sexual assault is a critical public health issue with pervasive biological, psychological, and negative social outcomes for survivors (The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network, 2018). The current study examined correlates of college students' understanding of issues around consent (i.e., literacy using technology, rape myth acceptance, attitudes towards women, and hypermasculinity) and a possible relationship with knowledge of the #MeToo social media campaign. This chapter provides the scope of sexual assault on college campuses with respect to definitional issues and underreporting of incidences to campus officials or law enforcement. Feminist, social learning, and critical race theory are introduced as relevant framework for conceptualizing the study. The significance of the study for the social work field will be discussed at the conclusion of the chapter.

Problem Statement

The United States criminal justice system has defined rape as threatened, attempted, or completed penetration without consent (Sinozich & Langton, 2014). In contrast, The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey and Campus Sexual Assault Study adopted a public health approach, expanding sexual assault terminology to include non-criminal behaviors by the National Crime Victimization Survey (Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher & Martin, 2007). Coercion and unwanted non-contact experiences, with or without the use of force, are considered offenses in research examining campus-based sexual assault (The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network, 2018; Sinozich & Langton, 2014). In order to address college students' safety, recent

laws passed by both California and New York have defined sexual consent as "affirmative, conscious, and voluntary" (California Senate Bill SB-967, 2014).

College students are shown to be at high risk for sexual assault, with little change in reported rates within the last five decades (Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013). While college life encourages age-appropriate experiences for young adults, newly found freedom increases the potential for victimization (Muehlenhard, Humphreys, Jozkowski, & Peterson, 2016). Students' limited understanding of explicit consent, high levels of rape myth acceptance and hypermasculinity, and negative attitudes towards women create an environment that is conducive to sexual assault on college campuses (Jozkowski, Peterson, Sanders, Dennis, & Reese, 2014; Muehlenhard et al., 2016).

The Campus Sexual Assault Study (CSA) showed that sexual assault survivors are 13 times more likely than non-survivors to attempt suicide, and 4 out of 5 experience chronic physical or psychological conditions (Krebs et al., 2007). This trauma transcends the physical and emotional experience itself, as societal reactions and responses are pivotal to a woman's recovery (Krebs et al., 2007; Cabral, Dworkin, & Campbell, 2009). Survivors of sexual assault have an increased risk of developing mental health issues including depression and posttraumatic stress, as well as experiencing academic decline and truancy if there is a failure to provide appropriate resources (Holland & Cortina, 2017). According to The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (2018), only 1 in 6 survivors of campus-based sexual assault was provided services, not including those who did not officially report the crime, leaving many survivors vulnerable to additional negative impacts. In a sample of 750 women surveyed after the first and second semester

of their freshman year, Jordan, Combs, and Smith (2014) found a positive correlation between lower GPA scores and having experienced campus-based sexual assault.

In response to data showing that one in five college women experience unwanted sexual contact, The United States Department of Education's assistant director Russlynn Ali (2011) wrote the Dear Colleague Letter (DCL). Her document identified sexual violence as a civil rights violation, calling upon the Title IX protection for an education free of discrimination based on sex (Ali, 2011; Sinozich & Langton, 2014). To maintain federal funding, the DCL required universities to enhance or create protocols for increasing sexual assault awareness on campus (Ali, 2011). In addition to CSA reports, highly publicized incidents at affluent private universities brought affirmative consent and campus sexual assault to the forefront of public and political consciousness.

In 2014, Columbia graduate student Emma Sulkowicz filed a formal case with university administration, asserting she was raped by a fellow student with whom she had previously had consensual sex (Grigoriadis, 2014). Sulkowicz reported being badgered throughout the hearing into providing details of the attack, to which she eventually responded by asking if they wanted her to "draw a picture" (Grigoriadis, 2014). After her accused assailant was found not guilty, she created an activism/art piece, *Mattress Performance (Carry That Weight)* in which she carried her mattress everywhere for the entirety of her senior year, including her graduation ceremony, to demand visibility of her experience (Grigoriadis, 2014).

In 2016, Stanford University student Brock Turner was found guilty of three felony counts of sexually assaulting an unconscious woman after a fraternity party in 2015 (Gonzales, 2016). Turner argued the encounter was consensual despite two

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bicyclists intervening on the behalf of the survivor after witnessing him assaulting her motionless body behind a dumpster (Gonzales, 2016). In defense of the lenient 6-month sentencing, with Turner only serving 3 months, Judge Aaron Persky maintained prison time would have "a severe impact" on Turner (Gonzales, 2016; Gonzales & Domonoski, 2018). The survivor presented a letter directly to Turner during court detailing the effects of the assault. She challenged the defense strategy of discounting her credibility by implying she was partially responsible for the incident by being intoxicated (Baker, 2016). Senator Joe Biden, a long time sexual assault advocate, publicly responded to the bravery of the survivor maintaining, "you were failed by anyone who dared to question this one clear and simple truth: Sex without consent is rape. Period. It is a crime" (Biden, 2016).

Me too emerged in 2006 as a grassroots movement founded by Tarana Burke to address the lack of sexual assault resources available to low income communities for people of color (Burke, 2006). In addition, me too (2006) aimed to create solidarity among survivors and de-stigmatize the experience of sexual assault, as well as demand systematic change regarding the accountability of perpetrators. In the wake of sexual assault charges filed against powerful men involved in politics, the entertainment industry, and media, celebrity endorsement propelled by actress Alyssa Milano appropriated Burkes' work. #MeToo became a campaign designed to increase the visibility of sexual assault survivors and in late 2017, worldwide use of the hashtag flooded social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook (Tambe, 2018). In this time, approximately half a million participants openly revealed their experiences with sexual assault (Pazzanese & Walsh, 2017; Tambe, 2018). According to Facebook,

almost 50% of American users reported that someone in their feed posted a personal disclosure (Tambe, 2018). The transparency of survivors created dialogue, revealing the prevalence of sexual misconduct beyond the narrowly defined social construct of rape (Pazzanese & Walsh, 2017). Further, #MeToo challenged the cultural tendency to suspect the credibility of survivors and sympathize with powerful perpetrators, as well as confronted societal shame associated with coming forward as a survivor (Tambe, 2018).

Although the #MeToo social media campaign has brought a voice to the experiences of sexual assault survivors, little is known about college students' level of knowledge of #MeToo and its relationship to other key constructs. To address the gap in literature, the current research examined whether college students' attitudes toward explicit sexual consent is associated with knowledge of the #MeToo social media campaign. In addition, it explored interrelationships among literacy using technology, attitudes towards explicit sexual consent, rape myth acceptance, traditional attitudes towards women, and hypermasculinity.

Scope of the Problem

Definitional Issues

The Centers for Disease Control (2012) reports that 1 in 5 college women have experienced attempted or completed rape; however this statistic does not include other forms of sexual assault (Rennison & Addington, 2014; Sinozich & Langton, 2014). These definitional inconsistencies have resulted in lower reported rates of campus sexual assault (Sinozich & Langton, 2014). For example, The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) relies on the criminal justice definition of rape, "the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex

organ of another, without consent of the victim," which underestimates the prevalence of coercive behaviors (Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004; Fedina, Holmes, & Backes, 2018, p.1). Jozkowski et al. (2014) noted sexual assault has often been defined with a focus on nonconsensual behavior including the use of force, however emphasized the use of intoxication was also within these parameters.

Sinozich and Langton (2014) compared the prevalence rates of campus sexual assault as reported by the NCVS and the CSA study, and found discrepancies due to the content of the questionnaires. The primary approach of NCVS was the criminal aspect of sexual assault, with their survey solely focused on "threatened, attempted, and completed rape." NCVS data showed that 4.7% of females in post-secondary schools experienced sexual assault between the years of 2007 and 2013 (Sinozich & Langton, 2014). Conversely, the CSA included a much broader definition of sexual assault, including unwanted sexual contact and the inability to give consent while incapacitated, and found prevalence rates to be 14% since entering college (Krebs et al., 2007). A systematic review of 34 CSA studies published between 2000 and 2015 found unwanted sexual contact and sexual coercion to be the most prevalent type of sexual assault, with upward of 32% of female college students reporting having been victims of these experiences (Fedina et al., 2018).

Underreporting of Sexual Assault

In addition to definitional issues, the accuracy of statistics has been compromised by widespread underreporting of sexual assault (Fedina, et al., 2018; RAINN, 2018; Sinozich & Langton, 2014). The Association of American University Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct (2017) showed that only 5-28% of college

students reported sexual assault incidences to campus officials or law enforcement (Cantor, Fisher, Chibnall, Townsend, Hyunshik, & Thomas, 2017). According to The Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (2018), college students do not report sexual assault for many reasons, including they are afraid of backlash, do not want to get the perpetrator in trouble, and they do not think it is important or that the police help. Holland and Cortina (2017) found that among 284 female college survivors of sexual assault, only 16 disclosed the incident to a campus support and 5 filed formal complaints. Themes revealed by the research for reasons why students underutilized campus resources included minimizing the impact of the experience, with one woman's response being, "it happens to girls all the time" (Holland & Cortina, 2017, p. 6).

Theoretical Significance

Campus-based sexual assault can be conceptualized through the lens of feminist and social learning theory, which address the prevalence of gender-based violence among college students. In addition, critical race theory will be used to examine sexual assault through a multidimensional lens of inequity, including an intersectional approach to addressing institutional oppression (Armstrong, Gleckman-Krut, & Johnson, 2018; Crenshaw, 1989).

Several risk factors associated with the age-appropriate developmental phase of young adulthood contribute to increased likelihood of misunderstanding issues around sexual consent. While feminist theory identifies sexual assault as systematic inequality of sex and power, social learning focuses on sexually aggressive behaviors as learned and supported by peers (Boyle, 2015). Critical race theory argues that Black women are not only excluded from statistics showing campus-based sexual assault, but that the resources

provided to survivors (i.e. law enforcement) are those which have been historically racist (Wooten, 2017).

Feminist theory is concerned with addressing sexual assault by demanding a cultural shift to eliminate rape culture (McPail, 2015). Awareness of the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses is directly linked to acknowledging gender-based sexual violence and normalizing explicit sexual consent scripts (Haaken, 2017; Sharp, Weaver, & Zvonkovic, 2017). The feminist movement is dynamic, and has traversed many political climates, however confronting sexual assault and harassment as a public health issue has always been at the forefront of the agenda (Haaken, 2017; Sharp et al., 2017). Radical and liberal feminists have framed explorations of sexual violence within feminist theory differently, however are harmonious in their emphasis on the necessity of systematic change to address violence against women (Haaken, 2017). In addition to a traditional approach to reform, it is posited prevention can begin with a less formally by simply encouraging girls to assert themselves while fostering the nurturing side of boys (Haaken, 2017).

Feminist scholar and author of *Against Our Will* (1975), Susan Brownmiller, identified rape as a tool utilized by men within a patriarchal society to control and dominate women. Murnen, Wright and Kaluzny (2002) describe sexual violence as a tactic that is designed to keep women in constant fear, leading to vulnerability and a perceived need for protection. According to Hall (2001), socially accepted fear-based spaces for women inhibit freedom and perpetuate a world bound by gender.

Embedded in traditional approaches to addressing sexual assault on college campus, is an emphasis on preparing women for the inevitability of sexual violence with

prevention programs including interventions such as providing rape whistles (Haaken, 2017). Bedera and Nordmeyer (2015) identified four major themes while investigating the sexual assault prevention websites of 40 different colleges: women are never really safe, women cannot ever trust anyone, women should never be alone, and women are vulnerable at all times. The most common tips for preventing sexual assault included, "avoid being alone," "don't drink too much/don't use drugs or alcohol," "take a self-defense class," and "say no" (Bedera & Nordmeyer, 2015, p. 56).

The "no means no" gendered sexual script places the burden of responsibility on women to refuse sex as opposed to an expectation of men to gain consent before advancing (Muehlenhard et al., 2016). As a result, the multitude of reasons why a woman may not refuse is minimized or even used to place blame on the survivor (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Muehlenhard et al., 2016).

According to social learning theory, accepted beliefs systems occur through observation, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1977). Socially learned behaviors are reinforced for better or worse through imitation of peers and conformity to cultural norms (Bandura, 1977; & Boeringer, Shehan, & Akers, 1991). College males between the ages of 18 and 24 are entering the emerging adulthood stage of development where a primary task is to test and refine their identity through socialization (Thompson, Swartout, & Koss 2013). Male students who join Greek life communities may be more accepting of sexually aggressive behaviors due to exposure to environments that foster male dominance and hostility towards women (Akers et al., 1991; Boyle, 2015). Support and attachment to abusive peers has been shown to influence understanding of sexual

consent, which may be reinforced by college subcultures such as high-risk fraternities (Warren, Swan, & Allen, 2015).

The proclivity to perpetrate sexual assault may be linked to problematic behaviors that typically emerge within high-risk fraternity houses, such as excessive drinking, exaggerated masculinity, and ritualistic disrespect of women (Boyle, 2015; Jozkowski & Wiersma-Mosley, 2017). In conclusion, social learning theory identifies college life is a pivotal time for peer influence over students' attitudes towards explicit sexual consent, adherence to rape myth acceptance and masculinity, as well as shared attitudes towards women.

Critical race theory was articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, who sought to examine institutional discrimination as a complex intersection of oppression. Crenshaw posited race and gender are not experienced individually by people of color, but rather are inextricably linked and overlooked by traditional (white) feminists (Crenshaw, 1989). Critical race theory critiques that violence against women stems from male domination over female sexuality, arguing this is a limited perspective excluding Black women's experiences with gender-based violence (Crenshaw, 1989; Wooten, 2017). Conversely, Black feminists exert sexual assault is a product of the historical and systematic abuse of women of color by white men (Wooten, 2017). In addition, Crenshaw (1989) notes the social construct of the "ideal" rape victim i.e. white and virginal, lends to an impossibility of successful conviction of white perpetrators of sexual violence against Black women (Wooten, 2017). The lack of representation of women of color in research concerned with campus-based sexual assault raises concern regarding what Armstrong, Gleckman-Krut, and Johnson (2018) identified as "sociological silence on sexual violence" (p. 99).

Contribution to Field of Social Work

The social work profession is in a unique position to advocate for systematic changes in response to campus-based sexual assault. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2018) Code of Ethics states there is an obligation of practitioners to pursue social justice and advocate for access to quality services through policy changes empowering individuals and communities (Kahn, 1973; NASW, 2018). In addition, the Code of Ethics specifies that social workers have an ethical responsibility to "critically examine and keep current with emerging research knowledge relevant to social work" (NASW, 2018, pg. 6).

Recognition of campus-based sexual assault as a social welfare problem has received considerable national attention in the past decade, with laws defining what constitutes as explicit consent passed in both California and New York. Despite advancements in mandatory prevention and response programming on college campuses, Backes, Fedina, and Holmes (2018) found between 2000-2015, upward of 32% of college women to have experienced unwanted sexual contact and coercion.

The current study focused on knowledge of the #MeToo social media campaign and its possible relationship to key constructs around college students' understanding of issues around consent (i.e. rape myth acceptance, attitudes towards women, and hypermasculinty). Further exploration of the possible impact of #MeToo as a influential variable may prove useful in guiding future research, best practice, and involvement in policy changes in the design and the development of campus-based sexual assault prevention programs.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Current State of the Knowledge

Studies consistently have identified adherence to rape myths, negative attitudes towards women and hypermasculinity, as contributors to perpetration of sexual assault by college students (Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013**;** Murnen & Kohlman, 2007; Thompson, et al. 2013; Warren, et al., 2015). This section will review studies examining correlates college students' attitudes towards explicit consent, rape myth acceptance, attitudes towards women, and hypermasculinity, among college students. This section also includes a discussion about social media campaigns as a vehicle for social movements.

Emerging research has suggested social media has become a powerful tool in raising awareness of political movements, with #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo utilizing the platform in recent years to address social issues (Ince, Rojas, & Davis, 2017). #MeToo frames sexual harassment and assault as an epidemic and has called for a cultural shift that properly assigns accountability to perpetrators (Pazzanese & Walsh, 2017). Due to the newness of #MeToo, there is a lack of empirical research examining correlates of awareness of this social media campaign.

College Students' Literacy of Technology

According to Koc and Barut (2016), new media literacy was crucial for college students to engage in modern forms of participatory consumption of information. They identified media literacy as the ability to navigate Internet search engines and social networking sites such as Instagram and Twitter (Koc & Barut, 2016). In addition, Koc and Barut (2016) suggest a person who is digitally literate has the capacity to operate technical aspects of digital platforms.

College Students' Attitudes Toward Explicit Consent

In order to address the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses, California was the first state to enact a law supporting affirmative and explicit consent (i.e. the 'yes is yes' policy) in 2014. The law required consent to be "affirmative, conscious, and voluntary," and federal student financial assistance was linked to compliance with this policy (California Senate Bill SB-967, 2014, p.1). Further, it maintained that consent must be ongoing throughout an interaction, and that consent could not be assumed because of previous sexual experiences with an individual (California Senate Bill SB-967, 2014). The policy explained that an intoxicated party cannot grant explicit consent and that consent remains the responsibility of all parties involved to ensure that it is given without coercion or pressure (California Senate Bill SB-967, 2014). Interactions are considered nonconsensual until consent is explicitly given by both parties and "silence or lack of resistance, in and of itself, does not demonstrate consent" (California Senate Bill SB-967, 2014, p.1).

Although wording of the SB-967 suggests that the use of explicit *verbal* affirmations is required, the policies do not specify whether students must utilize this form of negotiating consent (Muehlenhard et al., 2016). The liberal Ohio university of Antioch created the Antioch College Sexual Offense Prevention Policy, built upon the requirement that all consent be expressed verbally, however was publicly scrutinized for this specificity (Muehlenhard et al., 2016). In addition to a Saturday Night Live mocking Antioch's proposal in 1993 as unrealistic and overzealous, Humphreys and Herold found university students in their 2004 study viewed Antioch's explicit consent policy adversely. In addition to finding this policy to be impractical to enforce, they expressed

concern with this type of regulation as encroaching upon their personal freedom (Humphreys & Herold, 2004)

Humphreys and Brousseau (2010) offered the definition of consent as both freely given and a "feeling of willingness" to engage in sexual activity (pp. 420). They suggest consent may be granted with or without overt verbal communication, and oftentimes the language relies heavily on euphemisms of sex through which misinterpretations may arise (Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010). In cases where verbal consent was utilized, students reported using normative sexual scripts and favor indirect communication, avoiding literal statements such as "I consent to have sex with you" (Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010). They posited receiving consent through indirect means alone may lead to ambiguity about a partner's intent (Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010). Jozkowski et al. (2014) suggest inferences (i.e. internal consent) may be inaccurate when expressed as the only form of willingness to engage in sexual activities.

Humphreys and Brousseau (2010) found college students avoided explicit verbal consent as a reflection of perceived behavioral control, as initiating these conversations may be seen as taboo and open up the possibility of being rejected. Hurlbert (1991) identified a positive correlation between a participant's comfort level with assertive communication regarding their sexual desires with their competency of negotiating consent (Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010). Muelenhard et al. (2016) as well as Jozkowski, et al. (2014) suggested ambivalence towards consent to be gender-based, noting traditional sexual scripts rely heavily on an expectation of women not to initiate sex but rather respond to men's advances. In addition, Hust, Rodgers, and Bayly (2017) noted the societal expectation of female subordination and male aggression to reflect a power

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differential within sexual encounters. Within these parameters, women scored higher on utilizing passive consent, while men acted as instigators in sexual encounters, aligning with these predictions (Jozkowski et al., 2014).

Participants in numerous studies regardless of gender, reported being uncomfortable about verbalizing consent and worried that doing so would inhibit the spontaneity of sex; therefore, students more frequently opted to use nonverbal behaviors and physical signals such as touching and kissing to both express and interpret consent (Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010; Humphreys & Herold, 2007). Muelenhard et al. (2016) found only 11% of participants consented through verbal means alone, however both men and women reported "no response" to be the indication of consent (Jozkowsi et al., 2014, pp 906). In their study of 185 students, Jozskowski et al. (2014) found that female participants consented to sex by not saying no or "just letting it happen," in contrast to "yes means yes" approach to expression of consent (p. 910). Jozkowski et al. (2014) found men translated a non-verbal lack of resistance (i.e. "not pulling away") as consenting and were at risk to misconstrue a woman's interest in participating in sexual activities (p. 473). Jozkowsi et al. (2014) found students reported they communicated refusal verbally more often than consenting verbally.

These results imply students to express and interpret consent in a manner in contrast to "silence or lack of resistance, in and of itself, does not demonstrate consent" within the SB-967 (2014). Participants rated this behavior as being the least consistent with the definition of consent, but they were most likely to use it in their everyday negotiations (Muehlenhard et al., 2016). Muehlenhard et al. (2016) found that students

across studies reported that sexual consent was important but that they mostly offered no resistance to communicate their consent.

Humphreys (2007) found consent norms to change depending on the length of the relationship as well as the type of sexual activity. Participants reported couples that had been together for longer periods of time were less culpable for obtaining sexual consent from their partner (Humphreys and Herold, 2003). In addition, sexual acts including a type of penetration or behaviors outside normative encounters increased the expectancy to obtain consent (Humphreys, 2007). The study conducted in 2014 by Jozkowski et al. mirrored these expectations, noting less intimate activities included kissing and oral sex.

Humphreys and Herold (2007) found that 60% of students preferred providing consent prior to sexual activity with women favoring a partner asking *before* advancing (Humphreys & Herold, 2007; Jozkowski et al., 2014). Humphreys (2004) found significant gender differences, with 35% of men assuming initial consent implied consent for the whole encounter as opposed to the 22% of women in the study disagreeing with this statement. Students expressed a greater importance for obtaining consent during a first sexual encounter, while gaining consent became less critical in successive engagements (Humphreys, 2007; Humphreys & Herold, 2007).

Jozkowski et al. (2014) emphasized the importance of conducting research about college students' attitudes towards consent noting this relationship to be linked to campus based sexual assault. Warren et al. (2015) research found that found students who had a greater awareness of explicit consent were less likely to have perpetrated sexual assault in the previous 4 months. Further, adherence to rape myth acceptance, conformity to

masculine norms, and peer support of abuse were negatively associated with knowledge of consent (Warren et al., 2015).

College Students' Level of Rape Myth Acceptance

Pioneer feminist scholar Burt (1980) defined rape myths as "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists" (p. 217). Rape myth acceptance (RMA) is a social construct that permits exoneration of perpetrators and justification of violence against women (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980). Brownmiller (1975) posited that rape myth acceptance leads to societal discrediting of sexual assault and hostility towards survivors via rhetoric such as "she deserved it," and "women ask for it." Current research identified five key constructs lending to the perpetuation of RMA including; promotion of traditional gender roles, sexist beliefs/behaviors, adversarial sexual beliefs, hostility/distrust towards women, and viewing violence as appropriate and often necessary (Johnson & Johnson, 2017).

PettyJohn, Muzzey, Maas, and McCauley (2018) suggest an evolution in the social construct of RMA within media and social media platforms further perpetuates rape culture. Weiser (2017) posited language that has been used in the media may contribute to sympathizing with perpetrators and minimize the survivors' experience. The statements made by news reporters regarding athletes such as those involved in the Steubenville and Brock Turner rape cases as having had "bright futures" decreased the accountability of those who have committed sexual assault (Humphreys et al., 2016; Penninton & Birthisel, 2016). Franiuk, Seefelt, and Vanello (2008) found among participants who had been exposed to headlines about sexual assault cases that endorsed RMA, reported higher levels of victim blaming. These studies suggest the prevalence of

rape culture is pervasive in media with statements using language eluding to dishonesty such as "alleged victim" and "accuser," to describe survivors of sexual assault (Franiuk, et al., 2008).

The pervasive belief that women lie about being sexually assaulted as a means to alleviate the guilt of a consensual encounter is still reported within RMA studies (Weiser, 2017). Contrary to this belief, a 2010 analysis of data collected by university police for 10 years showed that only 5.9% of 136 cases were false reports (Lisak, Gardinier, & Nicksa, & Cote, 2010). Women of color and those belonging to lower socioeconomic statuses are at higher risk of experiencing sexual assault and more often discredited than their non-minority and upper-class counterparts (Krebs et al., 2016). Armstrong, Gleckman-Krut, and Johnson (2018) suggest the criminal justice system is predisposed to favor the perpetrator and the historical mistreatment of people of color and sexual minorities contributes to the mistrust of police and underreporting of sexual assault.

Another myth perpetuating RMA that has been identified in research, is the expectation that should a woman not fight back against the perpetrator, it cannot be called rape (Peterson & Muelenhard, 2004). Muelenhard et al. (2016) posited the traditional sexual expectation that a woman be responsible for stopping sexual advances may lead to her being blamed for not doing enough to end the encounter. A lack of refusal may occur for many reasons, including intoxication, fear, and continuation of advances by the perpetrator despite resistance (Jozkowski & Hunt, 2014).

Victim blaming has been woven into the fabric of RMA literature, with a woman "deserving" to be sexually assaulted when her behaviors are deemed promiscuous (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980). Under this belief, choice of clothing becomes an

invitation for entitlement of men over womens' bodies (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980; Meulenhard et al., 2016; Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2004). Grubb and Turner (2012) suggest survivors of sexual assault are judged as being responsible and RMA, especially victim blaming, may be used as a "psychological neutralizer" to justify behaviors of perpetrators (pg. 445).

McMahon (2010) found among RMA subscales used with college students, "he didn't mean to," to have the highest mean score, indicating the belief that a man cannot control his sex drive, causing them to rape. High-risk drinking on college campuses increases the likelihood of sexual assault and contributes to the misconception that should a man be intoxicated, he cannot be responsible for his behavior (Abbey et al., 2003). Studies have shown in sexual assault cases where drugs and alcohol are involved, there is an increased likelihood of increased acceptance of rape myths (McMahon & Farmer, 2011; RAINN, 2018). In a 2010 study of 237 students, Arnowitz, Lambert, and Davidoff found that 41% believed that if a woman was drunk when assaulted, she was to blame; while in contrast, perpetrators were exonerated if they were drunk at the time of the assault. McMahon (2005) found students to believe sexual assault could happen "accidentally," and that there were circumstances where a man could not be held entirely accountable for his actions.

Baldwin-White and Elias-Lambert (2016) surveyed 197 undergraduate and graduate social work students to explore whether alcohol use contributed to higher levels of RMA. The results revealed that social work students were less likely to demonstrate high levels of RMA if neither party had been drinking (Baldwin-White & Elias-Lambert, 2016). The study showed a bias towards the woman drinking alcohol versus a man, in

that levels of RMA were lower if the perpetrator was drinking and the woman remained sober (Baldwin-White & Elias-Lambert, 2016).

Gender differences in levels of RMA emerge across studies, with results indicating that females are more likely than men to reject rape myths (McMahon & Farmer, 2011).

Payne, Lonsway, and Fitzgerald, created a 45-item scale to measure RMA in 1999, the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA), which was utilized to assess college students' attitudes toward rape. In 2011, McMahon and Farmer modified the scale to include more nuanced language indicative of more subtle forms of RMA, positing the jargon used within the IRMA to be outdated and traditional. In addition, they suggested the antiquity of the scale threatened the validity of using the measure for use with modern college students. McMahon and Farmer (2011) hypothesized increased awareness among college students of the obvious forms of rape myths in the IRMA increased the likelihood for social desirability bias (McMahon & Farmer, 2011).

McMahon (2005) found participants to express victim blaming in more covert ways, implying women allow themselves to be in danger of sexual assault by virtue of their dress, drinking, and flirting. "If both people are drunk, it can't be called rape," "If a guy is drunk, he might rape someone unintentionally," "It shouldn't be considered rape if a guy is drunk and doesn't realize what he's doing," and "If a girl doesn't say 'no' she can't claim rape," were four items that were added to indicate students' adherence to more subtle rape myths (McMahon & Farmer, 2011).

College Students' Attitudes Towards Women

Grubb and Turner (2012) describe gender roles as being constructed through socialization and impacts how an individual views others and the self. The process of socialization influences sexual behavior, where society perpetuates sex role stereotypes of dominant men and fragile women (Grubb & Turner; Muelenhard et al., 2016; & PettyJohn et al., 2018). Historically, patriarchal attitudes towards women include an expectation of females to show compliance to a man's wishes and behave in a manner that is socially acceptable (Haaken, 2017; Hall, 2001). Women who delineate from "proper," behavior are more likely to be the target of scrutiny and victim blaming (Burt, 1980; Forbes & Adams-Curtis, 2001).

PettyJohn et al. (2018) suggest the traditional belief that men should hold the role of the head in the household is problematic and perpetuates less egalitarian attitudes towards women. The Attitudes Towards Women (AWI) scale, created in 1973 by Helmreich and Spence sought to explore blatant forms of sexism around conventional beliefs. Items measured participants' adherence to sex role stereotypes such as a woman's place being in the home and an expectation of her to have a lack of interest in a career, politics, or her own pursuits. They found participants who held higher beliefs in female stereotypes were more likely to hold antifeminist beliefs, while those who rejected stereotypes, showed positive attitudes towards women (Helmriech & Spence, 1972). Similarly, beliefs in traditional sex role stereotypes has been shown to contribute to higher levels of RMA and negative attitudes towards sexual assault survivors (Burt, 1980; Chapleau & Oswald, 2007; Humphreys & Herold, 2007).

In the context of female sexuality, traditionalists rely heavily on gender role expectations that restrict women's sexual freedom while encouraging male dominance and prowess (Hust, Boyce Rogers, & Bayly, 2017; Jozkowski, Marcantonio, & Hunt, 2017; Seabrooke, Ward, & Giaccardi, 2018). In addition to the socially constructed expectation of women to remain passive while concurrently sexy, holding anti-feminist beliefs contribute to a woman's obligation to "be nice" (Muehlenhard et al., 2016).

Traditional gender roles perpetuate expectations of women to be the 'gatekeepers' of sexual limitation, placing the burden of refusing advances on women (Muehlenhard et al., 2016). If she does not resist, she is blamed for the assault (Muehlenhard et al., 2016). In addition, Muehlenhard et al. (2016) argue that the reasons why women do not resist advances vary, including incapacitation due to intentional or unintentional consumption of alcohol and/or other drugs, fear, and confusion. Jozowski and Hunt (2014) found that college males who reported acting aggressively after their partners refused sex implemented coercive tactics and did not consider their behavior to be inappropriate because they saw women as "something to be overcome" (p. 271).

Whatley's (2008) study of 360 undergraduate students showed a positive shift in both male and female reported attitudes reflecting support for the expanded rights of women in American society, indicating a decrease in acceptance of sex role stereotyping.

Hypermasculinity

Mosher and Sirkin (1984) defined hypermasculinity as exaggerated adherence to traditional male gender roles. These authors pioneered the Hypermasculinity Inventory (HMI), which sought to assess characteristics such as "callous sexual attitudes toward women, violence as manly, and danger as exciting" (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984, pg. 1).

Similarly, Kupers (2005) defined "toxic masculinity" as male behaviors steeped in the most problematic propensities towards sexism, homophobia, and domination of others. In addition to posing a threat to individuals, toxic masculinity may influence the larger cultural reaction to sexual assault (Sculos, 2017).

Exclusive all-male groups often dominate controlled parties in fraternity houses and adhere to a culture of peer-learned violence against women (Boyle, 2015). Numerous studies have found cultural norms within high-risk fraternities to reflect hypermasculine beliefs and that members have an increased propensity to commit sexual assault (Boyle, 2015; Burk, Burkhard, & Sikorski, 2004; Jakupcak, Lisak, & Roemer, 2002; Mahalik et al., 2003 Murnen & Kohlman, 2007; & Warren et al., 2015). Heavy drinking, sexual competition among fraternity members, and collective secrecy create circumstances conducive to sexual assault, leaving college women highly vulnerable (Boyle, 2015; Murnen & Kohlman; Locke & Mahalik, 2005; Muehlenhard et al., 2016).

Thus, the extent of research shows that hegemonic masculinity is associated with low levels of understanding of consent, as well as high levels of sexually aggressive behaviors (Corprew III & Michell, 2014; Jakupcak, Lisak, & Roemer, 2002; Murnen & Kohlman, 2007; & Mahalik et al., 2003; Warren et al., 2015). Murnen and Kohlman (2007) found hypermasculinity among fraternity members and athletes to be the strongest predictor of sexual violence while Locke and Mahalik's (2005) study of 254 male, freshman, college students showed a correlation between hypermasculine personality attributes and sexually aggressive inclinations. Their study resulted with 27% of the male participants self-reporting that they felt tempted to use force to obtain sex (Locke & Mahalik, 2005).

In addition, Lutz-Zois, and Moler, and Brown's (2015) study of 100 males enrolled in introductory sociology and psychology courses found that participants who held higher adherence to hostile masculine attitudes, showed higher levels of RMA. Burk et al. (2004) similarly found hypermasculine attributes to be strong predictors for adherence to RMA. In a study of 165 male college students, Jakupcak et al. (2002) found that those ascribing to higher levels of traditional masculine ideology were more likely to accept rape myth attitudes.

Thompson, Swartout, and Koss' (2013) four-year longitudinal study conducted with 800 men enrolled in college, showed that hostile masculinity was one of the highest risk factors for perpetration of sexual assault (Thompson, Swartout, & Koss, 2013).

Warren, Swan, and Allen (2015) surveyed 217 heterosexual college males and found that those who scored higher on conformity to masculine norms reported a sense of entitlement, as well as demonstrated a lack of healthy boundaries and disrespect for women (Mahalik et al., 2003).

Social Media Campaigns as Vehicles for Social Movements

The modern use of social media for disseminating political information has been reflected in a cultural shift to online mechanisms for promoting activism on raising awareness of key social issues (Pennington & Birthisel, 2016). By utilizing a hashtag (#) symbol followed by a chosen word or phrase, a "tag" can be viewed by anyone on the app who searches for the content. Further, any image "tagged" is added to the collection, creating a huge database for public viewing (Pennington & Birthisel, 2016).

Ince, Rojas, and Davis (2017) suggest that social media campaigns offer a new arena for both activists and the layperson to participate in modern movements. In addition

to raising awareness, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram users are offered a platform to interact via "sharing" the content. In a more passive approach, people online may open discussions, or get directly involved in planning civil protests advocating social justice (Ince et al., 2017). Although social media campaigns are an unconventional means of activism, all levels of participation contribute to the growth of a movement. This vast dissemination of content is not without criticism, as anyone can manipulate the intent of the organizers to fit their agenda and create counter-movements (Ince et al., 2017).

In addition to supporting counterculture movements, the availability of social media has had broad implications for subpopulations of college students traditionally known for RMA and disrespecting women. For example, a video was posted on Instagram in 2015 showing St. Mary's University students leaders performing a chant during frosh week "SMU boys we like them YOUNG! Y is for your sister. O is for oh so tight. U is for underage. N is for no consent. G is for grab that ass" (National Post Staff, 2013). Although the post was deleted, and administration claimed it would be the last year of this performance, the only reprimand noted was that three student leader executives received mandatory sensitivity training (National Post Staff, 2013).

In 2010, Yale students chanted openly "no means yes, yes means anal," which was mimicked by some Louisiana State and Texas Tech University students who posted signs with the same statement on fraternity houses in 2014 (Jozkowski & Wiersma-Mosley, 2017; Sharp, Weiser, Lavigne, & Kelly, 2017). In yet another highly public statement of adherence to rape myth culture on college campuses, a large southeastern university's fraternity sector displayed signs including, "Rowdy and fun. Hope your baby girl is ready for a good time" (Giraldi & Monk-Turner, 2017). Despite suspension by

their national chapter, a local news station created a Facebook feed as a forum for responses, with most of the locals who responded dismissing this language as humorous and "harmless fun" (Giraldi & Monk-Turner, 2017).

Video and audio recordings displaying police brutality against people of color going viral incited the creation of the Black Lives Matter hashtag. The digital platform united those experiencing modern oppression demanded accountability of the judicial system and systematic racism (PettyJohn, Muzzey, Maas, & McCauley, 2018). Following the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder of teenager Trayvon Martin under the 'stand your ground law,' Oakland-based organizer Alicia Garza made this post on Facebook "Black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter. Black lives matter" (Demby, 2016; Davis, Inca, & Rosas, 2017). Joined by activists Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, Black Lives Matter became the #BlackLivesMatter (#BLM) social media campaign calling for public mobilization against systematic oppression of people of color. Although concerned with all police shootings of unarmed African American men, the case of Michael Brown in Ferguson MO propelled #BLM into public awareness, with activists carrying #BlackLivesMatter signs in the protests across the country (Davis, Ince, & Rosas, 2017).

Ince et al., (2017) found that negative appropriation of #BLM content to have occurred in the wake of the Ferguson events. Before the Michael Brown incident, #BLM had been tweeted 373 times, while afterwards, number of tweets propelled to 19,942. The popularity of the hashtag and counter posts of #alllivesmatter and #bluelivesmatter appeared to have a direct connection to the increased popularity of #BLM (Ince et al., 2017).

Following in the footsteps of #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo has flooded public consciousness about the breadth of sexual harassment and assault within society. People of all walks of life have shared their accounts, bearing witness to the public health issue of sexual violence. PettyJohn et al. (2018) emphasized the importance that researchers recognize "hashtag activism" as a platform to identify gaps in awareness of sexual assault and utilize the modern form of information dissemination for improving systematic response. Similar to the backlash of #BLM, #MeToo was criticized as being a "witch hunt," legitimizing false allegations, and encouraging a "battle of the sexes" (Kunst, Bailey, Prendergast, & Gundersen, 2018). Kunst et al. (2018) found gender differences to be associated with negative reactions to #MeToo, with men expressing a more adversarial attitude towards the social media campaign.

Although research has been done to explore social media campaigns such as #BlackLivesMatter, there is no published scholarly research examining the #MeToo social media campaign.

Seminal Investigations

A select group of researchers conducted studies focusing on awareness of consent among college students. Muehlenhard et al. (2016) provided an empirical review of prior research that utilized data collected with the Sexual Consent Scale and the Sexual Consent Scale Revised (Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010; Humphreys & Herold, 2007). The authors compiled relevant content, including examples of inconsistencies in the definition of consent across studies and how college students conceptualized the term. Humphreys and Brousseau (2010) recommended ongoing research on the topic of sexual assault on college campuses.

Warren et al. (2015) shed light on the interrelationships among RMA, hypermasculinity, and understanding of consent of college students in their recent study implementing the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA; Payne et al., 1999), Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI; Mahalik et al., 2003), and Comprehension of Sexual Consent/Coercion Scale (Gibson & Humphreys, 1993). The results reflected higher CMNI and IRMA scores were negatively associated with awareness of sexual consent among students.

Summary of Literature Review

This section will discuss the implications of the reviewed studies reviewed for this research and limitations found within empirical investigations will be identified. Prior research has explored correlates of college students' awareness of sexual consent with results indicating that higher levels of RMA, hypermasculinity, and negative beliefs about women are associated with less awareness of consent issues (Warren et al., 2015). In addition, participants who held more hypermasculine attributes endorsed higher levels of RMA (Murnen & Kohlman, 2007).

Koc and Barut (2016) posited literacy using technology to be a critical platform for college students to participate in modern exchanges of information. Media literacy includes the capacity to navigate search engines as well as social media platforms to gain exposure to current events and other pertinent media content (Koc & Barut, 2016).

According to the affirmative consent laws that have been enacted in California and New York, silence or a lack of resistance is not indicative of consent (California Senate Bill SB-967, 2014, p.1). Across studies, however, college students reported expressing and interpreting consent non-verbally (Humphreys & Herold, 2007;

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Muehlenhard et al., 2016). Gender differences emerged, with men being more apt to react to implicit physical cues, while women expected more direct communication (Jozkowski et al., 2014). Female participants communicated consent by not saying no and only 10% of men relied on verbal behaviors to interpret their partner (Jozkowski et al., 2014). These results may imply a lack of awareness or adherence of affirmative consent policies among college students (Muehlenhard et al., 2016; Jozkowski et al., 2014).

Consent norms of college students changed depending on the length of the relationship, with participants reporting the need to obtain consent to decrease with time (Humphreys and Herold, 2003). The nature of the sexual act also determined the importance of consent and activities deemed less intimate reduced the expectancy to obtain consent (Humphreys, 2007).

Warren, Swan, and Allen (2015) found RMA has been correlated with both lower levels about attitudes towards explicit consent and an increased likelihood of sexual perpetration. Across studies, victim blaming was more prevalent for sexual assaults that involved alcohol and drugs (Baldwin-White & Elias-Lambert, 2016). Arnowitz et al. (2010) found that 41% of students believed that if a woman was drunk when assaulted, she was to blame. Conversely, the assault was excused if the perpetrator was drunk at the time of the assault (Arnowwitz et al., 2010). In addition, students believed there were circumstances where men could not be held fully accountable for an assault and that it may have occurred "accidentally" (McMahon, 2005).

College students who held more traditional attitudes towards women have been shown to have higher levels of RMA and tend to have an increased propensity for victim blaming (Grubb & Turner, 2012; McMahon & Farmer, 2011; Whatley, 2008). Gender

differences emerged across studies, showing men held less egalitarian attitudes towards women, however a 2008 study showed an overall increase in liberal views of women by both men and women than that from previous research (McMahon & Farmer, 2011; Daugherty & Dambrot, 1986; Whatley, 2008).

In contrast to traditional expectations of female passivity, hypermasculinity embodies sexual dominance over women (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984). In addition to an increase in RMA, research has shown hegemonic masculinity is associated with low levels of understanding of consent and a propensity to exhibit sexually aggressive behaviors (Corprew III & Michell, 2014**;** Jakupcak, Lisak, & Roemer, 2002; Murnen & Kohlman, 2007; & Mahalik et al., 2003; Warren et al., 2015)**.**

Emerging research has explored the possible impact of social media campaigns in raising awareness of social movements, with #BlackLivesMatter at the forefront of online activism (Ince et al., 2017; Pennington & Birthisel, 2016). Similarly to #BLM demanding accountability of police brutality against people of color, #MeToo has inserted the prevalence of sexual assault into hashtag activism (PettyJohn et al., 2018). There has been no published research to date that has examined correlates of issues around consent and the #MeToo campaign among college students, which may emerge as a potentially influential variable to addressing campus-based sexual assault.

CHAPTER 3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Purpose

Using a sample of undergraduate students, the current cross-sectional study sought to examine interrelationships among sociodemographic characteristics, literacy using technology, students' attitudes towards sexual consent, rape myth acceptance, attitudes towards women, hypermasculinity, and knowledge of the #MeToo social media campaign. The survey research sampled 110 undergraduate students enrolled in two freshman sociology class.

The following research questions framed the study:

1) What are the sociodemographic characteristics of students enrolled in an undergraduate sociology class?

2) What is students' literacy with using technology to gain information online?

3) What are students' attitudes towards explicit sexual consent?

4) What is students' level of rape myth acceptance?

5) What are students' attitudes towards women?

6) To what extent do students adhere to hypermasculine attributes?

7) What is students' knowledge of the #MeToo movement?

8) Are there differences between men and women with respect to key outcomes of interest?

9) What are the interrelationships among students' sociodemographic characteristics, literacy using technology, attitudes towards explicit consent, level of rape myth acceptance, attitudes towards women, hypermasculinity, and knowledge of the #MeToo movement?

Key Terms

Attitudes Towards Explicit Sexual Consent

The concept, attitudes towards sexual consent, is defined as students' beliefs about the importance of explicit consent within sexual encounters, how often consent must be negotiated, if consent can be assumed with the absence of a "no," and whether consent may be inferred for different types of sexual relationships (Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010). The latter definition is aligned with the legal definition of affirmative consent, which has been implemented as a framework for creating college campus sexual assault prevention programming and administrative response to formal complaints (de León, 2014).

Rape Myth Acceptance

Rape myth acceptance (RMA) is defined as students' beliefs that place false blame on victims, dismiss accountability of perpetrators, and minimize violence against women (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980). McMahon and Farmer (2011) suggest subtle rape myths include a more covert form of victim blaming such as the belief that women become targets by putting themselves in precarious positions. Criticizing the way women may choose to dress, and whether they were drinking or flirting, become justifications for indirectly placing blame on women for being sexually assaulted (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). Attitudes consistent with RMA are linked to lower levels of sexual consent, as well as increased likelihood of perpetrating sexual assault (Warren et al., 2015).

Attitudes Towards Women

The construct, attitudes towards women, is defined as the extent to which respondents adhere to traditional beliefs about women. Conservative gender role

stereotypes include expectations of women to fulfill domestic roles, act sexually submissive, and lack motivation to hold positions of power (Whatley, 2008). Further, "ladylike" behavior is expected; cursing, drinking, and assertiveness are considered inappropriate, while "being nice" despite discomfort is encouraged (Muehlenhard, Humphreys, Jozkowski, & Peterson, 2016). Higher adherence to traditional sex role stereotypes decreases egalitarian beliefs, contributing to callous attitudes towards women (Daugherty & Dambrot &, 1986; Whatley, 2008).

Hypermasculinity

Hypermasculinity is defined as exaggerated adherence to traditional male stereotypes including toughness, antifemininity, and exertion over female sexuality (Murnen & Kohlman, 2007; Warren et al., 2015). Mosher and Sirken (1984) conceptualized hypermasculinity as adopting the misogynistic view that males are dominant and females submissive. Burk, Burkhart and Sikorski (2004) linked "sensation-seeking, dominance over others, and interpersonal violence" to the perception of "maleness" (p.5). Adherence to hypermasculine attitudes has been shown to be a predictor of both normalizing violence against women and sexual aggression (Burk, Burkhart, & Sikorski, 2004; Mosher & Sirken, 1984).

Knowledge of the Social Media #MeToo Campaign

#MeToo is a cultural phenomenon exposing the prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment among survivors worldwide (Jaffe, 2018; Tambe, 2018). Calling upon the users of social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram), #MeToo encouraged participants to build solidarity using shared experiences, hold perpetrators accountable, and raise awareness of the pervasive public health issue (Jaffe, 2018). The current study

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sought to determine whether students are aware of #MeToo and understand the issue it represents.

Relationships Among Variables

For the proposed study, it was expected that students who report higher levels of RMA, hold negative attitudes toward women, and have higher levels of hypermasculinity, will have lower levels of positive attitudes towards explicit consent. It is anticipated that positive attitudes toward explicit consent will be associated with awareness of #MeToo.

Empirical Indicators

The current research incorporated four empirically valid scales to measure students' literacy with technology, attitudes towards explicit consent, adherence to RMA, attitudes towards women, and level of hypermasculinity. Sociodemographic data and information about students' knowledge of the #MeToo social media campaign were collected with researcher-developed survey items.

Sociodemographic characteristics of participants included self-reported sex, age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, major, and membership in an LSU Greek community chapter. Two subscales of the *Sexual Consent Scale-Revised (SCS-R)*, consisting of 18 items, were utilized to examine students' attitudes toward explicit consent (Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010). The 22-item *Updated Measure for Assessing Subtle Rape Myths* was used to measure students' level of RMA (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). To determine students' level of adherence to traditional sex role beliefs about women, the 15-item *Attitudes Towards Women Inventory (AWI)* was used (Hornsvelt, Timonen, Kraaimaat, Zwets, & Kanters, 2014). To assess the level of students' hypermasculine attributes, the

19-item *Hypergender Ideology Scale-Short Form (HIS-SF)* was utilized (Hamburger, et al., 1996). Finally, four researcher-developed survey items were incorporated to determine students' knowledge of the #MeToo social media campaign and whether they understand that it is concerned with sexual harassment and sexual assault.

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the proposed cross-sectional descriptive study was to examine interrelationships among college students' sociodemographic characteristics, literacy using technology, attitudes towards explicit sexual consent, level of RMA, attitudes towards women, hypermasculinity, and awareness of the #MeToo social media campaign. Sociodemographic characteristics include sex, age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, major, and membership in an LSU Greek community chapter were also assessed.

Sample and Procedures

Data was collected from 110 students enrolled in two freshman sociology courses at a large southeastern university. The sociology department serves 400 undergraduate majors with an additional 200 minors, and individual classes include up to 150 students. The study utilized a non-probability convenience sample due to the inability of the researcher to randomly select participants (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). A written, self-administered survey instrument was distributed to students during the first 15 minutes of the two classes during the fall term of the 2018 academic school year. A consent script was embedded on the first page of the survey. A pilot testing the survey instrument was used with a comparable population of voluntary participants.

A sample size of 80 to 100 respondents is suggested by Rubin and Babbie (2010) to assure an adequate level of power (.83-.86), at a level of significance set at .05, to detect a medium effect size (.60). The proposed sample size of 150 respondents will ensure sufficient power for bivariate analysis of the data (Rubin & Babbie, 2010).

Protection of Human Subjects

The current study was expedited by the LSU Institutional Review Board. The survey was anonymous, and the research posed minimal risk to participants. Students were informed that their anonymity would be maintained, and that no identifying information was collected by the researcher.

The purpose of the research was discussed with participants and the researcher was available to answer any questions about the study. Students were told in advance that some survey items ask about their knowledge of issues around sexual assault on college campuses. Students were provided contact information for the researcher and available resources on and off campus if they experienced any level of distress, at any time, as a result of completing the survey.

Research Design

The current descriptive study employed a cross-sectional design to explore associations among students' sociodemographic characteristics, literacy using technology, attitudes toward explicit consent, rape myth acceptance, attitudes towards women, hypermasculinity, and knowledge of the #MeToo social media campaign.

Instrumentation

The current survey consisted of 88 items in seven major sections. The survey instrument collected information about students' sociodemographic characteristics, literacy using technology, attitudes toward explicit consent, RMA, attitudes toward women, hypermasculinity, and knowledge of #MeToo. The survey instrument was piloted with a comparable subsample of undergraduate students who were asked to

provide feedback regarding the wording, readability, and layout of the survey questionnaire.

Sociodemographic Characteristics

Students' sociodemographic characteristics were collected with five items. One open-ended question will be used to determine age (How old are you today?). Gender identity was assessed with two options, male or female and do you identify as transgender or non-binary. Race and ethnicity was measured with the six options from the U.S. Census Bureau: (African American, American Indian/Native Alaskan, Asian, White (Non-Hispanic), Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and Other, Please specify).

Participants' major was assessed with one item that uses the following options (Sociology, Mechanical Engineering, Mass Communication, Psychology, or other). Finally, membership in an LSU Greek community was determined with one item (0=Yes, 1=No).

Literacy of Technology

College students' literacy of technology was assessed using *The New Media Literacy Scale (NMLS)* (Koc & Barut, 2016). Seven items from the subscale (Functional Consumption) was used to determine college students' competency with using social media (Koc & Barut, 2016). This subscale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .85, indicating adequate internal consistency reliability. Responses included options 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Some items included were, "I know how to use search tool to get information I need in the media", and " I am good at keeping up with the current events in the media" (Koc & Barut, 2016).

Attitudes Towards Explicit Consent

Holding a positive attitude towards sexual consent emphasizes the importance of explicit and ongoing consent within all sexual encounters (Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010). Two *(SCS-R)* subscales (i.e. Positive Attitudes Toward Establishing Consent, Sexual Consent Norm) will be used to measure students' attitudes toward affirmative consent (Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010). Eleven items from Positive Attitudes Toward Consent subscale and seven from the Sexual Consent Norms subscale will be used, with response options ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree*)* to 7 (Strongly Agree*)* (Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010).

Humphreys and Brousseau (2010) reported that the 11-item Positive Attitude Toward Establishing Consent subscale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .84, indicating adequate internal consistency reliability. Examples of items include, "Before making sexual advances I think that one should assume "no" until there is a clear indication to proceed", and "I believe that asking for sexual consent is in my best interest because it reduces any misinterpretations that might arise" (Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010).

The 7-item Consent Norms Subscale achieved a Cronbach's alpha of .67, indicating moderately low internal consistency reliability. Examples of items from this subscale include, "I think obtaining sexual consent is more necessary in a casual encounter than in a committed relationship", and "I believe it is enough to ask for consent at the beginning of an encounter" (Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010).

RMA

The *Updated Measure for Assessing Subtle Rape Myths*, created in 2011 by McMahon and Farmer, measures subtle rape myths by using modern language to

decrease bias responses (i.e., social desirability). Four subscales emerged from focus group participation, "She Asked for It, He Didn't Mean To, It Wasn't Really Rape, and She Lied" (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). The content including newly nuanced constructs, is measured with a Likert scale with response options ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree) (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). The 22-item *Updated Measure for Assessing Subtle Rape Myths* obtained good internal consistency reliability (.93) and demonstrated predictive validity through the "positive correlation of men's rape proclivity and sexual aggression" (McMahon & Farmer 2011, pg.72).

The scale includes items such as, "If a girl is raped while she's drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of control" and "If a girl doesn't say "no" she can't claim rape" (McMahon & Farmer, 2011).

Attitudes Towards Women

The *Attitudes Towards Women Inventory (AWI)* uses a 5-point scale with response options ranging from 1 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree) to assess antisocial attitudes toward women (Hornsveld et al., 2014). The instrument was shown to have good internal consistency, inter-rater reliability, and test-retest reliability. Examples of items include, "It is the duty of a woman to satisfy the sexual needs of her husband, and "If a woman is drunk, you are allowed to do anything to her," (Hornsveld et al., 2014).

Hypermasculinity

The 19-item *Hypergender Ideology Scale-Short Form (HIS-SF)* uses a 6-point Likert type scale with response options ranging from 0 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree) (Hamburger, Hogben, McGowen, & Dawson**,** 1996). The *HIS-SF* achieved good

test-retest reliability (.95) over a 21-day period and Dawson et al. (1996) reported the *HIS-SF* to be psychometrically sound.

Examples of the *HIS-SF* include, "Get a woman drunk, high, or hot and she'll let you do whatever you want", and "No wife is obligated to anybody, not even her husband" (Hamburger, et al., 1996).

Knowledge of #MeToo

Students' knowledge of the #MeToo social media campaign was be measured by a three-item test of knowledge. One item asks whether students have heard of the social media campaign (0=No, 1=Yes). Additional items ask respondents to select True, False, or Don't Know on the following items; "The #MeToo social media campaign is primarily concerned about sexual assault on college campuses," "One of the main goals of #MeToo is to publicly identify famous actors who have perpetrated sexual assault," and "#MeToo was founded by actress Alyssa Milano." A test of knowledge was computed by summing the correct responses on these latter three items, with higher scores indicating higher levels of awareness of the #MeToo social media campaign.

Data Analysis

Univariate statistics was used to summarize and describe data. Frequencies and proportions were used to summarize categorical variables, including sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, major, and membership in Greek organization chapter. The mean, standard deviation, and range was used to summarize students' ages. The mean, standard deviation, and range was used to summarize students' scores on continuous measures assessing attitudes toward sexual consent, RMA, hypermasculinity, and attitudes toward women. Cronbach's alpha was computed to determine evidence of the internal

consistency reliability of the scales assessing attitudes toward sexual consent, RMA, hypermasculinity, and attitudes toward women (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). Frequencies and proportions were used to summarize students' awareness of the #MeToo movement, a categorical variable.

Bivariate statistics were used to answer questions examining two variables at a time. Independent t-tests were used to determine whether there were differences between men and women on measures of attitudes toward sexual consent, RMA, hypermasculinity, and attitudes toward women (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). Chi square was used to examine the distribution of gender and awareness of the #MeToo movement (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). Interrelationships among key constructs were examined using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient and the point-biserial correlation coefficient (Brown, 1988). A correlation matrix was computed to determine the magnitude and direction of the relationships between variables (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). Data was analyzed using The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. ™

CHAPTER 5. RESULTS

The present descriptive study employed a cross-sectional design to describe students' sociodemographic characteristics, literacy using technology, attitudes toward explicit consent, rape myth acceptance, attitudes towards traditional roles of women, hypermasculinity, and knowledge of the #MeToo social media campaign.

A power analysis indicated that a sample of 80 to 100 respondents was sufficient for bivariate analysis of the data, with an adequate level of power (.83-.86) and a level of significance set at .05 in order to detect a medium effect size (.60) (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). The current research utilized a sample of 110 undergraduate students, exceeding Rubin and Babbie's (2010) suggested 80 to 100 respondents. In order to ensure equal representation of male and female students, the researcher randomly selected 55 instruments from the male respondents and 55 from the female respondents.

Sociodemographic Characteristics

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics that summarize participants' sociodemographic information. The current study sample included 55 men whose mean age was 19.07 ($SD = 1.53$) and 55 women with a mean age of 18.69 ($SD = 1.16$). Participants' ages ranged from 17-24 (see Table 1). As seen in Table 1, the vast majority of participants (91.8%) reported being heterosexual. In terms of race, almost two thirds were non-Hispanic white, (65.5%), whereas just over one third was non-white (34.5%).

As seen in Table 1, 80.9% of students who participated in the current study reported having a major other than the response options provided (19.1%) by the researcher (i.e., sociology, mechanical engineering, mass communication, and

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psychology). Approximately three fourths of students did not belong to an LSU Greek

organization (74.5%) whereas approximately one fourth did report belonging to a Greek

organization (See Table 1).

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics ($N = 110$)

	M	*SD*	Range	Frequency	Valid %
Age	19.07		17-24		
Gender					
Male	--	--	--	55	50
Female	--	--	--	55	50
Sexual Orientation					
Heterosexual	--	--	--	101	91.8
Non-Heterosexual	--	--	--	9	8.2
Race					
Non-Minority	--	--	--	72	65.5
Minority	--	--	--	38	34.5
Major					
Other	--	--	--	89	80.9
Researcher Provided	--	--	--	21	19.1
LSU Greek Membership					
No	--	--	--	82	74.5
Yes	--	--	--	28	25.5

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics summarizing participants' scores on key

measures, including literacy using technology to obtain information, attitudes towards

explicit sexual consent, level of RMA, attitudes towards women, and hypermasculinity.

Students' Literacy Using Technology Students' literacy using technology was

measured with the 7-item NMLS subscale, Functional Consumption (Koc & Barut,

2016). As shown in Table 2, NMLS scores ranged from 17 to 35. The mean score of 29.8

indicates that students reported moderately high levels of literacy using technology.

Students' Attitudes Towards Explicit Consent Students' attitudes towards explicit sexual consent were measured the 11-item Positive Attitudes Toward Consent subscale and the 7-item Sexual Consent Norms subscale (Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010). As shown in Table 2, the SCS-R scale scores ranged from 72-126. The mean score for college students in the current study was 96.4, indicating participants held moderately positive attitudes towards explicit sexual consent.

Students' Level of RMA The Updated Measure for Assessing Subtle Rape Myths was used to measure college students' adherence to RMA (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). As seen in Table 2, scale scores ranged from 22 to 84. The mean score of 45.7 indicates that participants in the current study demonstrated moderate levels of RMA.

Attitudes Towards Women Participants' attitudes towards the traditional roles of women were assessed with the AWI scale (Hornsveld et al., 2014). AWI scale scores ranged from 12 to 60. The mean score of 19.7 indicates that students, on average, held less traditional attitudes towards women (See Table 2).

Hypermasculinity Students' levels of hypermasculinity were assessed with the HIS-F (Hamburger, Hogben, McGowen, & Dawson, 1996). HIS-SF scores for participants in the current study ranged from 32-86 (See Table 2). The mean score of 48.5 indicates that participants held relatively low levels of hypermasculinity.

Awareness and Knowledge of #MeToo Students' awareness and knowledge of the #MeToo social media campaign was assessed using a Correlation Matrix with four items. One item required a yes/no response: "Have you heard of the #MeToo social media campaign?" In the current study, 80 students reported affirmatively (72.7%) and 30 students reported negatively (27.3%) to this item. The remaining three items were scored

as correct or incorrect and summed to compute a total knowledge score ranging from 0-3:

The mean score for the #MeToo knowledge test was .80 (*SD*=.89) and the range score

was 0-3.

Table 2. Key Measures: Descriptive Statistics (*N*=110)

	M	*SD*	Range
NMLS	29.8	3.7	17-35
SCS-R	96.4	9.2	72-126
RMA	45.7	13.1	22-84
AWI	19.7	7.3	12-43
HIS-F	48.5	10.4	32-86

Table 3 presents differences between male and female participants on key

measures. As shown in Table 3, the mean ages of men (19.07) and women (18.69) were

comparable, as were their scores on the NMLS scale assessing literacy using technology,

at 29.96 and 29.65, respectively. The mean SCS-R scores assessing participants' attitudes

towards explicit sexual consent were moderately positive, and almost identical for men

and women (at 96.44 and 96.38, respectively).

As seen in Table 3, male students scored significantly higher (50.63) than women

(40.70) on the measure assessing RMA (at $t = 4.27$, $df = 108$, $p < .001$), indicating that

males demonstrated higher levels of adherence to rape myth acceptance than did females.

Mean scores on the HIS-SF also were higher for men (52.11) than for women (44.93).

This latter difference was significant, indicating that male students reported higher levels

of hypermasculinity than did female students. Table 3 shows that male students (21.53)

held significantly more traditional views of women than did female students (17.93),

at $t = 2.66$, $df = 108$, $p < .01$.

No significant difference emerged between male (.764) and female (.836) students

with regard to the 3-item #MeToo test of knowledge, although female scores were higher,

which indicated a slightly higher level of knowledge about #MeToo than their male counterparts (See Table 3).

The Cronbach's alphas for the NMLS, SCS-R, measure assessing RMA, AWI, and HIS-F were .83, .64, .91, .88, and .76 respectively. Thus, internal consistency reliability was deemed at least adequate for all measures except the SCS-R scale assessing participants' attitudes towards explicit consent.

Table 3. Differences Between Men and Women on Key Measures (*N*=110)

	M	*SD*	*t*	*df*	Lower	Upper
Age						
Male	19.07	1.54	1.466	108	-.134	.898
Female	18.69	1.17				
NMLS						
Male	29.96	3.54	0.432	108	-1.110	1.728
Female	29.65	3.95				
SCS-R						
Male	96.44	9.67	0.031	108	-3.455	3.564
Female	96.38	8.89				
RMA						
Male	50.64	13.06	4.271***	108	5.319	14.534
Female	40.71	11.25				
AWI						
Male	21.53	8.06	2.661**	108	.918	6.281
Female	17.93	5.97				
HIS-SF						
Male	52.11	11.58	3.839***	108	3.473	10.890
Female	44.93	7.64				
Total #MeToo						
Male	.764	.859	-.429	108	-.409	.26350
Female	.836	.918				

* *p*<.05, ** *p*<.01, *** *p*<.001

A correlation matrix was computed to determine the magnitude and direction of the interrelationships among key study variables. Gender was dichotomously coded as 0 and 1. SPSS automatically computes the point-biserial correlation coefficient with variable coded as such (Brown, 1988).

As seen in Table 4, gender was negatively and weakly associated with the RMA, AWI, and HIS-SF scales, at $r = -.380$, $-.248$, and $-.347$, respectively, indicating that male gender was correlated with higher levels of rape myth acceptance, more traditional attitudes towards women, and higher levels of hypermasculinity (See Table 4). Negative and weak associations emerged between NMLS, RMA, and AWI scores, indicating that students' literacy using technology decreased as students' level of rape myth acceptance, and more traditional attitudes towards women increased. A positive weak association emerged as students' literacy using technology increased, positive attitudes towards explicit consent increased. As seen in Table 4, a strong and positive relationship emerged between the RMA and ASI scales (at $r = .719$) indicating that rape myth acceptance increased as more traditional attitudes towards women also increased.

Moderate intercorrelations emerged between the HIS-SF and RMA ($r = .553$) and AWI scores ($r = .623$), indicating that as levels of hypermasculinity increased, so did levels of rape myth acceptance, and more traditional attitudes towards women (See Table 4). Finally, knowledge of the #MeToo movement showed a weak, negative relationship with AWI ($r = -.187$), indicating as more traditional attitudes towards women decreased, awareness of the #MeToo movement increased. In addition, a weak positive correlation emerged at ($r = 214$), indicating as age increased, knowledge of #MeToo decreased.

Table 4. Interrelationships among Key Study Variables

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Gender	1	-.140	-.042	-.003	-.380**	-.248**	.347**	.041
2. Age	--	1	.051	-.056	-.014	-.018	.103	.214*
3. Total NMLS Scale	--	--	1	.237*	-.208*	-.192*	-.130	.182
4. Total SCS-R Scale	--	--	--	1	.111	.081	.087	.081
5.Total RMA Scale	--	--	--	--	1	.623**	.553**	-.126
6. Total AWI Scale	--	--	--	--	--	1	.623**	-.187*
7. Total HIS-SF Scale	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	-.088
8. #MeToo	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1

*$p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$

CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION

The present study explored undergraduate students' sociodemographic characteristics, literacy using technology, attitudes toward explicit sexual consent, rape myth acceptance, attitudes towards women, hypermasculinity, and knowledge of the #MeToo social media campaign. Although previous research has identified rape myth acceptance, traditional attitudes towards gender roles, and hypermasculinity to contribute to negative attitudes towards sexual consent, this study sought to explore any possible correlation with an awareness of #MeToo social media and these key variables (Warren et al., 2015).

Sociodemographic characteristics of participants of this study were consistent with previous studies examining campus-based sexual assault, with the majority of participants identifying as heterosexual and non-minority (Cantor, et al., 2015; Muelenhard et al., 2016). Students' knowledge of #MeToo decreased as age increased, reflecting that younger participants in this study reported having a higher awareness than their slightly older counterparts. Surprisingly, identical proportions of men and women reported having awareness of the #MeToo social media campaign, however women scored slightly higher on the knowledge test.

College students who participated in this research had moderately high levels of literacy using technology, lending to an ability to navigate social media platforms and search engines. It was expected students would score high on this survey instrument, however, there was not a significant correlation between these results and knowledge of #MeToo. This appears counterintuitive to the speculation that exposure to #MeToo would occur through social media, lending to a possibility that they had experienced some form

of exposure elsewhere. Although #MeToo has been utilized as a hashtag specific to online platforms, there has been prolific media coverage, including support and backlash alike. In contrast, the results showed a weak positive correlation between students' level of literacy using technology and more positive attitudes towards sexual consent. Although the presumption was not significant, the results provide fodder for what and whom social media may be influencing.

Participants of the current study were asked four questions to determine their level of knowledge regarding #MeToo. The purpose of this research was to explore whether there was a correlation between knowledge of the social media campaign and issues around sexual consent. Although it was expected that knowledge of #MeToo would result in positive attitudes towards sexual consent, lower levels of RMA, and less adherence to hypermasculinity, the results showed no correlation between these variables and knowledge of #MeToo. Consistent with the aforementioned hypothesis, however, students who reported less egalitarian attitudes towards women reported having no knowledge of the social media campaign.

The results of the current study indicated students held positive attitudes towards explicit consent; however, no difference emerged between men and women. The internal consistency reliability of the SCS-R (at .76) was low, which may have compromised students' understanding of survey items, or social desirability may have been an issue.

Students who participated in this study reported moderate levels of RMA, with men scoring significantly higher than women. These results were congruent with previous studies, which consistently showed gender differences in the level of rape myth

acceptance among college students (Baldwin-White & Elias-Lambert, 2016; Farmer & McMahon, 2011; McMahon, 2005; Payne, et al., 1999).

Additionally, this study showed an association between adherence to RMA, more traditional attitudes towards women, and hypermasculinity. Results are similar to previous studies, which have shown that beliefs in traditional sex role stereotypes and adherence to hypermasculine attributes contribute to higher levels of RMA among college students (Chapleau & Oswald, 2007; Humphreys & Herold, 2007).

Results of the current study revealed participants who held less egalitarian attitudes towards women had less knowledge of #MeToo. By definition, traditional stereotypes of women lend to a patriarchal view of female fragility that discourages assertiveness and perpetuates a need for protection (Haaken, 2017; Muehlenhard et al., 2016; Whatley, 2008). Despite institutions of higher education in America increasing sexual assault prevention programs, the responsibility of avoiding sexual assault lies upon women (Bedera & Nordmeyer, 2015). New college students may be provided rape whistles or encouraged to be vigilant of their surroundings, implying one is always vulnerable (Haaken, 2017). In contrast, aside from bystander intervention, the participation of men to end rape culture is nearly non-existent in current sexual assault prevention on college campuses (Bedera & Nordmeyer, 2015; Haaken, 2017).

One of the most notable outcomes of #MeToo was publicly exposing the magnitude of sexual assault worldwide (Jaffe, 2018; Tambe, 2018). The platform empowered survivors, demanding a cultural shift to destigmatize disclosure and validate the continuum of sexual assault beyond rape (Jaffe, 2018). #MeToo promoted transparency and challenged the cultural norm of remaining silent about experiences with

sexual assault (Jaffe, 2018; Tambe, 2018). In short, #MeToo was a pivotal moment in history to promote recognition of the resilience of sexual assault survivors, increase accountability of perpetrators, and dismantle a culture steeped in the propensity to blame victims.

Limitations of Current Study

The results of this current cross-sectional research design does not allow for inferences of causality. Further, the utilization of non-random participants must be recognized as limited to the two cohorts of students enrolled in freshman sociology classes at a public university in the southern United States, thus findings may only be generalized to students with similar demographics at a similar university. This research is the first of its kind and more exploration is necessary beyond an institutional setting. Future investigations exploring the issues around consent and #MeToo may be called upon to describe the variants at a more analytically advanced level. Finally, the SCS-R measure showed low internal consistency reliability and was reliant on self-reported data, which is vulnerable to bias.

Merits of Current Study

Research has speculated social media campaigns such as #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo play an important role in raising awareness of current political issues and social problems (Pennington & Birthisel, 2016). Franiuk et al. (2008) found exposure to headlines exhibiting language supporting common rape myths influenced participants' own attitudes towards survivors of sexual assault. In addition, PettyJohn et al., (2018) noted the role of exposure to social media campaigns as a public outcry for accountability for injustice. The results of contemporary research lend to postulation of the emerging

importance of continued exploration of this modern platform available to college students to utilize in programs to address campus-based sexual assault (Pennington & Birthisel, 2016).

The current study will lend to the growing knowledge regarding campus-based sexual assault and is the first known study to examine college students' awareness of a social media campaign concerned with widespread sexual harassment and sexual assault. At a turning point timing right for examining social perceptions and understanding sexual assault. In addition, there were 110 participants, with men and women having equal representation, exceeding Rubin and Babbie's (2010) suggested 80 to 100 respondents. In addition, all measures, with the exception of the SCS-R were found to have at least adequate internal consistency reliability.

Implications for Social Work Research

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2018) Code of Ethics states there is an obligation of practitioners to remain informed on current knowledge and emerging research relevant to the profession (NASW, 2018, pg. 27). The key constructs within this study including attitudes towards explicit consent, RMA, traditional views of women, and hypermasculinity lend to expanding upon the existing knowledge concerned with awareness of campus-based sexual assault.

In addition, there is emerging research exploring the use of social media platforms to raise awareness of social movements, however there is a lack of empirical research examining the #MeToo social media campaign. Results of the current study revealed college students held moderately high literacy with using technology, lending to

speculation that expansion of research concerned with utilizing social media to increase awareness of sexual assault may be useful for creating prevention programs.

Future research should expand upon the limited population surveyed for this study by including items more appropriate for LGBTQ+ students to increase representation of this group. In addition, expanding the inclusion of minority students is pivotal to gain insight on campus-based sexual assault, as the majority of research has utilized data collected from heterosexual, white college participants.

Implications for Social Work Practice

Social work practice is bound by an ethical obligation to promote social justice and adhere to best practice for clients. By virtue, social work is a logical partner to address campus-based sexual assault in a safe and supportive environment. Research has shown that survivors are at higher risk to experience negative mental and physical outcomes should there be a failure to provide appropriate services (Cabral, Dworkin, & Campbell, 2009; Holland & Cortina, 2017; & Krebs et al., 2007). In addition, societal reactions, i.e. service providers presenting with attitudes such as victim blaming, contributes to trauma and negatively impacts a survivor's recovery (Cabral, Dworkin, & Campbell, 2009; Krebs et al., 2007).

Awareness of college students' attitudes towards explicit sexual consent, adherence to RMA, traditional attitudes towards women, and hypermasculinity may be impactful for the knowledge base of social work practitioners to best approach sexual assault.

Implications for Social Work Policy

Within the last decade, awareness of the prevalence of campus-based sexual assault has promoted government intervention to systematically address preventative measures and appropriate response to sexual violence in university settings.

According to Kahn (1973), policies are driven by values, and upholding the well-being of the individual with respect the community reflects the tenets of the social work field. Although policies involving prevention and response have evolved with regards to mandating annual reports of incidences and increased prevention programs, activism revolving around the protection of vulnerable populations continues to fall short.

Title IX promised protection for an education free of discrimination based on sex, however policies regarding campus-based sexual assault are yet to address the patriarchial approach to mandated prevention programming (Ali, 2011; Sinozich & Langton, 2014). Feminist scholars have suggested the majority of these programs revolve around "risk reduction," directed towards women, as opposed to a focus on reducing perpetration of sexual assault on college campus (Bedera & Nordmeyer, 2015; Haaken, 2017; Sharp et al., 2017)

The results of this study indicate participants held positive attitudes towards explicit consent, however gender differences emerged, showing male participants scored higher on RMA, traditional attitudes towards women, and hypermasculinity. These findings may suggest gender-based prevention programming, with a focus on addressing common rape myths may be useful in expanding the awareness of campus-based sexual assault among college students.

Continuing to advance the approach to addressing campus-based sexual assault policy by increasing discussions about attitudes towards explicit sexual consent, RMA, traditional views towards women, and hypermasculinity among college students will contribute to creating sound and proactive policies.

Examining #MeToo as a radical social phenomenon used by survivors to expand awareness of sexual assault may result in exploring alternative approaches to the formulation of more inclusive and feminist-driven policy.

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APPENDIX. LSU IRB APPROVAL FOR EXEMPTION

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST

LSU

TO: Eve Hampson
             Social Work

FROM: Dennis Landin
             Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: October 23, 2018

RE: **IRB#** E11291

TITLE: Campus Based Sexual Assault: The #MeToo Movement and Students' Understanding of
             Issues Around Consent

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu
lsu.edu/research

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: New Protocol

Review Date: 10/22/2018

Approved _____X_____   **Disapproved**_____

Approval Date: 10/23/2018   **Approval Expiration Date:** 10/22/2021

Exemption Category/Paragraph: 2a

Signed Consent Waived?: No

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman _____

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –
Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:
1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE: When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.**

* *All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at http://www.lsu.edu/irb*

VITA

Genevieve Hampson received her BA from Portland State University in 2016, with a degree in Arts & Letters. She is interested in continuing her pursuits within the field of social work in the criminal justice reform arena and hopes to participate in both advocacy and direct practice with individuals and families who have been negatively affected by mass incarceration.