#WhyIDidntReport: Using social media analysis to inform issues with sexual assault reporting

Jordyn Warren

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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#WHYIDIDNTREPORT: USING SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS TO INFORM ISSUES WITH SEXUAL ASSAULT REPORTING

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Mass Communication

in

The Department of Mass Communication

by

Jordyn Warren
B.S., Appalachian State University, 2015
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ABSTRACT

The #MeToo movement allowed victims of sexual assault to go public with their stories. When Dr. Christine Blasey Ford came forward with allegations against Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh in September of 2018, she was scrutinized by President Trump for not reporting the incident to authorities “when it happened nearly 30 years ago.” Promptly, #WhyIDidntReport came to fruition on Twitter, uncovering the shame victims feel and the complexities behind why so many individuals didn’t and still don’t report their assaults. Victim-service agencies “provide victims with support and services to facilitate their physical and emotional recovery, offer protection from future victimizations, guide victims through the criminal justice system, or assist them in obtaining restitution.” Unfortunately, the utilization rate of victim-service agencies is still only 8% for all violent crimes— not just rape and sexual assault. The purpose of this study is to identify contemporary themes around sexual assault and to determine what factors impact reporting and utilization of sexual assault services in the U.S. By using social media this study identified barriers and challenges victims face when reporting sexual assaults. From this data, I was able to recommend best practices for engaging with the public in online spaces in order to increase agency utilization.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the viral uproar of the #MeToo movement allowed victims of sexual assault\(^1\) to go public with their stories. Since then, nearly every sector of society—from politics to education, to movies and television—have been inundated with these pernicious stories of corruption, betrayal, and abuse within these systems.

A Pew Research study cites the #MeToo hashtag as being used over 19 million times from 2017 to 2018 (Geiger, 2018). Over that same period, various reporting bodies noted an uptick in reporting incidences of rape and sexual assault, which some scholars attribute to the hashtag. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission saw an increase of nearly 30,000 views on its web page about sexual harassment (see Appendix A) as well as a 12% increase in workplace harassment complaints (Chiwaya, 2018). Even though rape has proven to be a hugely underreported crime (Rennison, 2002), the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ *Criminal Victimization* report for 2017 showed an increase in percent and rate of victimizations reported to police from 2016 to 2017 for rape and sexual assault incidents (see Appendix B) (Morgan & Truman, 2018).

When Dr. Christine Blasey Ford came forward with allegations against Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh in September of 2018, President Trump scrutinized her for not reporting the incident to authorities “when it happened nearly 30 years ago” (Fortin, 2018). Promptly, #WhyIDidntReport came to fruition on Twitter, uncovering the shame victims feel and the complexities behind why so many individuals did not and still do not report their assaults.

Although conversations do not always contain the characteristics of a dialogic space (i.e., engagement, inclusivity, and respect), platforms like Twitter have given individuals a way to connect and use their voice to participate in—what can be described as—hashtag activism.

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\(^1\) For the purpose of this study, the term “sexual assault” encompasses a spectrum of behaviors including unwanted touch harassment, and verbal threats. It also includes rape but is not used as a replacement for rape.
In a *New York Times* article, one victim and hashtag participant noted how encouraging the hashtag campaigns had been for her, stating “I think what’s happened is that there is a greater ability to amplify the voices of the non-famous,” she said. “We are building a movement” (Fortin, 2018). Another victim described the power of social media movements as “potentially life-changing because you see hundreds of thousands of other people sharing their stories, and you don’t feel like you’re the only person this has happened to” (Fortin, 2018).

**Statement of the Problem**

Victim-service agencies “provide victims with support and services to facilitate their physical and emotional recovery, offer protection from future victimizations, guide victims through the criminal justice system, or assist them in obtaining restitution” (Morgan & Truman, 2018, p. 8). Unfortunately, the utilization rate of victim-service agencies is at only 8% for all violent crimes— not just rape and sexual assault (Morgan & Truman, 2018).

Stereotypes and stigmas, unpleasant interactions with, and mistrust of an organization can negatively impact victims’ relationships with victim-service agencies. For this reason, it is vital for agencies to practice public relations and focus on organization-public relationships. Public relations is a management function of business that is responsible for establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and its publics (Broom & Sha, 2013). Many organizations will redistribute public relations duties among other members of management, damaging public relations unique role in strategic management (Grunig, 2008). In a relationship where the organization and its publics have consequences to each other, it is in the interest of the organization to manage connections, (Hung, 2005) which can help reduce cost by minimizing future conflicts (Huang, 2001b, 2012) and increase the likelihood of the intention of supportive behaviors from the public (Kang & Yang, 2010).
With sexual assault victims being an especially vulnerable population, engaging and building relationships with them presents unique challenges. Existing research focuses mainly on system (Powell & Henry, 2016) or agency (Macy, Giattina, Parish, & Crosby, 2009; Payne & Thompson, 2008) perspectives of sexual assault, with few studies consulting victims themselves (Hung, 2013). Where consulting victims about their experience and how to improve agency services and resources may be triggering to some victims, failing to consult them can leave agencies operating through perceptual lenses. This may cause the agency to overlook actual needs of the victims ultimately missing essential themes and trends that will help them. It is both critically important and challenging to capture experiences with sexual assault in efforts to improve victims’ experiences with the agency, without inducing harm and damaging relationships with the victims.

**Purpose of the Study**

Social media affords us as many opportunities to participate as it does to spectate—making social media analysis a prospective alternative to prodding vulnerable populations for insights that we believe may help them.

Michael Brito (2014) brings up the idea of a social business strategy in his book *Your Brand, The Next Media Company*. A component of the strategy is a social command center. Many organizations are using these command centers to keep a pulse on the public opinion about their brand. Cisco Systems launched their command center in 2012, which consists of six screens showcasing real-time information about Cisco conversations happening on social media. Cisco can view and monitor all brand-related and competitive conversations and their share of voice in market conversations. It can also track whether or not social media “influencers” are talking about their products.
Where early command centers were dialogic and consequently reactive, new social media analysis capabilities allow organizations to monitor trending topics proactively and “create content that capitalizes on the real-time news cycle” (Brito, 2014, pg. 103). Social media movements like #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter could benefit from employing organizational brand strategies like social business command centers to monitor the conversations, emotions, and other insights to create relevant content that will strategically communicate related goals and objectives.

The purpose of this study is to use social media analysis to analyze the #WhyIDidntReport network, the various factors that influence sexual assault victims’ ability to share their stories online, and explore issues with sexual assault reporting through victims’ perspectives to determine what factors impact reporting and utilization of sexual assault agencies in the U.S. By conducting this research, I hope to address the following research questions: (1) What are the characteristics of the #WhyIDidntReport network and how are they significant to storytelling and sharing on social media? (2) How do sentiment and emotion influence the sense of support and community? (3) What are the most popular themes for why people don’t report? (4) What topics within comprehensive sex education could combat the issues presented in #WhyIDidntReport tweets?

Contributions to the Field of Mass Communication

Mass communication professionals are in a unique position that requires them to continuously improve how they seek, understand, and communicate information. Although hashtag movements are not necessarily a physical organization or an organized brand, they have the potential to amplify, bring awareness to, and create change for diverse groups of people. This study contributes to mass communication research by demonstrating how organizations can use
related hashtags and social media analysis as a sufficient means for gaining insights about their target populations.

The affordances of various social media platforms allow people to share freely and willingly, and on their terms, so it’s to our advantage to use this readily available data. For domains such as sexual assault, this method can provide insights while removing any mental or emotional risks victims may experience through traditional data collection methods.

In turn, the data can be used to improve organization-public relationships with victims and help social justice activists and workers amplify strategic messages, which will hopefully connect victims to the resources they need and increase agency utilization.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The sections that follow examine the existing literature on organization-public relationships (OPR) and dialogic communication as the theoretical background for this research, as these theories reinforce the concepts of relationship and engagement. I will then go on to review the underpinnings of online activism and social business strategy social command centers to illustrate how this research can improve relationships between sexual assault agencies and their publics by utilizing social media and emerging media tools.

Organization–Public Relationships (OPR)

Early public relations emphasized press agentry and publicity to gain attention for organizations but shifted as the need to build relationships was identified (Ferguson, 1984). Public relations practitioners were no longer just managing communications; they were expected to mobilize communication as a tool for leveraging relationships with their publics, thus contributing to the overall effectiveness of their organizations (Dozier, L. Grunig, & J. Grunig, 1995; Huang, 2001a, 2001b; Kent & Taylor, 2002).

In 1998, Ledingham and Bruning brought new meaning to the term "relationship" and introduced the concept of organization-public relationship (OPR) to public relations. They defined OPR as, "the state that exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impacts the economic, social, and political and cultural well-being of the other entity" (p.62).

The characteristics of OPR were derived from Wood's (2000) research on the components of successful interpersonal relationships. Through this research, they conceptualized OPR as trust, commitment, mutuality, and satisfaction between an organization and its publics (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).
Organizations rely on trust with all their publics (i.e., employees, suppliers, customers, and stakeholders) to remain effective, which is why organizations need to actively maintain relationships in various contexts (Jo, 2018). It’s up to the organization to balance the OPR in every setting, such as organization–investors, management–employees, and organization–local community to satisfy the needs of all publics. Trust is defined as, “one party’s level of confidence and willingness to open [himself/herself] to the other party” (Childers Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 3). Childers Hon & Grunig (1999) suggest that an organization can demonstrate trustworthiness to their publics by the extent they are willing to be impartial and honest, their ability to keep promises, and how consistently they keep promises.

Control mutuality ensures that an organization and its publics are satisfied with the decision-making processes and that there is an equal balance of power between two groups (Huang, 2001a). Although, it is possible that an organization may have to exercise its power over publics, prioritizing possibly unethical or unjust actions as desired by the organization’s leadership (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002).

Some view commitment as the most salient component for maintaining good relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Morgan and Hunt (1994) define commitment as a situation where publics are willing to put in the effort to stay in the relationship because the benefits outweigh any costs. Various publics may participate in different types of commitment. Affective commitment is a value-driven relationship (Gustafsson, Johnson, and Roos, 2005), or calculative commitment which is an exchange relationship based on cost and benefit (Randall & O’driscoll, 1997).

Relationship satisfaction comes from the relationship marketing ideal that it is easier to satisfy and keep current customers than it is to recruit new ones. For public relations, it has been
defined as when “one party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced” (Childers Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 15).

When organizations fail to balance all the OPR characteristics they risk cultivating unsuccessful relationships with their publics. For example, in 2016 and the years following, Michigan State University received backlash for allegedly ignoring complaints about Larry Nassar, the former USA Gymnastics national team doctor and osteopathic physician at Michigan State, who molested more than 300 girls and women. The school reached a $500 million settlement that would be paid by tuition and state aid (Lam, 2019). Even more recently, Michigan State University senior Bailey Kowalski talked about being sexually assaulted by three Michigan State basketball players in 2015. According to Kowalski, she was told, “If you pursue this, you are going to be swimming with some really big fish,” by a staff member who was trying to discourage her from reporting the assault (Tracy, 2019).

These back-to-back scenarios have raised a lot of red flags for current and prospective students, faculty and staff, parents and donors, resulting in damaged organization-public relationships. As the news about Nassar grew worse, the university suffered a 25% decrease in donations in the second half of 2017 (Rubin, 2018). The faculty senate also passed a vote of “no confidence” in the board of trustees after the board disregarded their wishes of hiring a competent interim president rather than former Michigan governor John Engler, who is alleged to have ignored instances of sexual assault at a woman’s prison (Kitchener, 2018).

**Dialogic Communication**

For many years, the dialogic theory has been the normative application of dialogue in public relations. When Kent and Taylor (1998) reintroduced the concept of dialogic communication to public relations, their focus was on communication mediated by the internet.
Dialogue in this sense refers to “any negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions (Kent & Taylor, 1998).” Its emphasis on negotiated communication makes it considerably ethical for conducting public dialogue and relations (Kent & Taylor, 1998). As noted by Leeper (1996), ethical public relations require dialogue and understanding to meet publics’ needs.

By creating and accepting this theory without dissent, they did not account for how much the internet would change over time. According to McAllister-Spooner, (2009) “the dialogic promise of the web has not yet been realized,” (p. 321) even though research has not been able to show uses for social media beyond a tool for information dissemination (Kennedy & Sommerfeldt, 2015).

Martin Buber (1970) expanded the concept of dialogic theory. He viewed communication as a process where all parties approach the relationship with openness and respect (Buber, 2970). The emphasis of a dialogic perspective is on the participants’ attitudes in a communication transaction and how they feel toward each other (Johannesen, 1971). Johannesen (1971) viewed dialogue much differently than monologic communication. He described dialogue as “genuine, accurate empathetic understanding, unconditional positive regard, presentness, spirit of mutual equality, and a supportive psychological climate” (p.376).

Kent and Taylor’s (1998) original theory of dialogic communication consists of five principles for successful web integration, including the dialogic loop, the ease of interface, conservation of visitors, generation of return visits, and the usefulness of information.

The ability for individuals to provide feedback and feel connected is what separates dialogic communication from monologic communication, making the dialogic loop extremely important to web communication. In a content analysis of 93 Fortune 500 companies’ Twitter
profiles the most frequently occurring feature was the dialogic loop (M = 39.07, SD = 32.08) (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010).

Kent and Taylor (1998) recognized that the internet had the potential to be used as a tool for building organization-public relationships. They believed it could “offer opportunities for immediate response to organizational problems and crises (p. 322).” Dialogue is the product of an organization’s ongoing relationship with its publics and not a means to an end (Kent and Taylor, 1998).

Cisezek and Logan (2018) do not agree with Kent and Taylor’s theory of dialogic communication as existing public relations literature on social media shows that most organizations do not behave dialogically. They believe it is necessary to use a postmodernist framework to account for and introduce changes presented by digital media such as social networking sites and mobile technology.

Kent and Theunissen (2016) argue that dialogue is not appropriate in every case of online communication. Symmetrical communication works in theory, but not always in practice, which is why the belief that any communication that does not work toward compromise or consensus is unethical cannot be true (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012). Too much focus on compromise or consensus “can be problematic to the degree that it detracts attention from the critical role that internal contestation and tension can have” (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012, p. 73).

In Cisezek and Logan’s (2018) analysis of Ben & Jerry’s using social media for Corporate Political Advocacy (CPA) by publicly supporting Black Lives Matter their findings suggest that:

Although Ben & Jerry’s aimed to spur conversations about race that would garner support for the company’s stance on racial justice, this was not necessarily a dialogic move; dialogue involves setting up a space for trust, reciprocity, and responsiveness. The comment thread was a hostile environment where users overwhelmingly did not deeply
engage with Ben & Jerry’s original message. Most commenters talked past one another and did not participate in a true dialogue. Users did not appear to listen, learn, or adjust their knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs; instead, they simply stated their position and moved on (p. 123).

This example shows that dialogue is not always the goal of communication. Even though the primary characteristics of dialogue were not present, and participants were not taking into account the needs of others while trying to build a mutually satisfying relationship (Kent & Lane, 2017), a social good was done by providing a platform for “multiple competing, and often conflicting, perspectives to emerge” (Ciszek, 2016).

Theoretical Underpinnings of Online Activism

Social movements look to overthrow the dominant belief system to validate an alternative system that “supports political mobilization and collective action (Gamson et al., 1982, p. 15). The advent of the internet has presented individuals and groups with unique, mediated social, political, and economic environments. A Pew Research study (Perrin & Jiang, 2018) cited that three-quarters of Americans are online daily, with some of them reporting being online “almost constantly.” It only makes sense that internet activities have become an integral part of how we seek and affect social change.

Connective Action

Collective action is when organizations use their resources to shape collective identities among people. High levels of organizational resources are critical to group identity, membership, and ideology. There may be no marginal gains associated with collective action, and the cost could outweigh the benefits for individuals (Olson, 1965).

The emergence of information and communication technologies allows individuals to organize without the resources that were once only accessible to well-resourced organizations (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Social media influences collective action in various ways
including: by providing critical information not available through traditional media, facilitating and coordinating events, allowing users to join political causes, and creating opportunities to exchange opinions with other people (Bennett & Segerberg, 2011; Chadwick & Howard, 2008; Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011).

The logic of connective action was developed from the recognition of digital media (e.g. internet, mobile technology, social media) as organizing agents (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Events from Arab Spring and los indignados to Occupy Wall Street have demonstrated how the strategic use of social media can encourage individuals to participate in a movement, creating action networks. There are two loosely patterned characterizations of action networks enabled by social media. The first is a behind-the-scenes effort usually established by an issue public or advocacy organization, who refrains from branding actions. Instead, they engage with the general public to encourage individuals to help disseminate information over their networks (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). The second pattern presents as demand or grievances that travel over the personalized accounts of individuals on social media. In both instances, there are no clearly defined roles for actors (Bennett and Segerberg 2012; Lim 2013; Walgrave et al. 2011).

Although connective action can resemble collective action, it eliminates the role of organizations in transforming social identities. Therefore, there are no hierarchies, thus encouraging the co-production and co-distribution of personal expression (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). All online communication does not always work this way.

**Hashtag Activism**

Laucuka (2018) cited ten communicative functions for hashtags, including topic-marking, aggregation, socializing, excuse, irony, providing metadata, propaganda, brand marketing, expressing attitudes and, initiating movements. More recently, the rise of hashtag activism has
become more prevalent on social media platforms (Yang, 2016). Digital platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube network individuals and create spaces for communication (Hermida, 2018). They have seemingly become paths for social mobilization and protest (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015; Madden, Janoske, & Briones, 2016).

Hashtags like #BlackLivesMatter and #Ferguson featured co-created narratives with personal thoughts, emotions, and stories from a collective group of online participants (Yang, 2016). These cases of online protest demonstrated the importance and power of digital activism in informing public discourse.

Williams (2015, p. 343) views Twitter as a “site of resistance,” especially for black feminists and other minority groups. Through hashtag activism, social actors can overcome media inattention about specific events or issues to garner public support (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015). An example of this is the #BringBackOurGirls campaign, an issue that was receiving inadequate news coverage outside of Nigeria. Social media users brought the matter to the forefront of global concerns by using the hashtag, which leads researchers to believe that hashtag activism can be used as a tool for mainstream agenda setting (Olson, 2016).

As social media and activism collide, activist activities rely more and more on online efforts to complement and even supplement offline efforts (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015; Madden et al., 2016; Seo, Kim, & Yang, 2009). In just two weeks, the hashtag was used over a million times, sparking mass rallies in front of the Nigeria’s defense headquarters in Abuja, the Nigerian government, and Nigerian embassies in London, Los Angeles, and New York (Olson, 2016). The campaign also succeeded in unseating former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, making him the first sitting president to lose his reelection (“Nigeria’s Goodluck Jonathan,” 2015).
Social Business Strategy for Social Movements

Nobel Peace Prize winner Professor Muhammad Yunnus coined and defined *social business* as a “non-loss, non-dividend company dedicated entirely to achieve a social goal. All profits, or ‘surplus revenue,’ is ploughed back into the venture for expansion and improvement” (“Muhammad Yunnus,” 2012). Stakeholders are aware that their dividends will come back in the form of social change (Grove & Berg, 2016).

Michael Brito (2014) has since defined a social business strategy that is a “documented plan of action that helps evolve and transform the thinking of an organization, bridging internal and external social initiatives resulting in collaborative connections, a more social organization and shared value for all stakeholders (customers, partners, and employees)” (p. 4).

His perspective looks at how implementing a social business strategy to turn a brand into a media company can afford positive business outcomes. A media company in this sense is not the traditional media company like Time Warner or *New York Times*, but rather any business (or movement) that publishes useful content to attract and build an audience (Brito, 2014).

Co-author of *Content Rules*, Ann Handley, elaborated on the idea of a media company by alluding to the fact that in a digital world, businesses as well as individuals, can use media tactics (Brito, 2014). In the fight to remain timely, relevant and control narratives, businesses must employ a strategy “that enables better content, smarter marketing, integrated communities, and more effective customer relationships” (Brito, 2014, p.5).

Brito coins the term “social command center,” but areas like emergency management have already implemented the concept (Pohl, Bouchachia, & Hellwagner, 2012).
More recently, nonprofits have become increasingly commercialized due to a decline in donor and governmental support, and competing sectors often scrutinize them for inefficacy and managerial competency (Grove & Berg, 2016).

Some researchers believe nonprofits should not act like private businesses but should leverage business model for increased effectiveness (Crutchfield, 2008).

A command center is a physical space that allows brands to listen, surveil, and engage with their publics (Brito, 2014).

Brito (2014) outlines eight strategic goals and objectives that brands can achieve with a social business command center. Which goals and objectives can be achieved, is dependent on the technology the brand decides to use and what features are available. When brands listen, they can look at reports that measure share of voice, mention volume, sentiment, network growth, and other engagement metrics. Some brands do this by listening for “brand mentions” to focus on customer support issues and addressing them quickly.

Brands can use command center technology to take action by adding value to relevant conversations about the brand. By participating in the conversation, it allows the brand to control the narrative and rebound from any harmful content. It also allows the brand to become recognized as a trusted member of the community.

Building and maintaining an audience presents an opportunity for brand advocacy. Converting audience members into advocates will help garner support for and disseminate information about the brand, which will reach a wider audience than the brand could have done alone.
The ability to see trends and patterns in real time allows brands to create content in real time. Creating relevant content, at the right time, in the right channels is critical in a continuous news cycle.

Finally, command centers can help brands with innovation and research. The aggregated data essentially acts as a crowdsourcing mechanism. Customer insight and demographic and psychographic data can provide collective feedback much quicker in real time.

The American Red Cross launched its Digital Operations Center in 2012 to monitor and respond to disasters. During Hurricane Sandy in that same year, they were able to monitor and track #Sandy across Twitter, Facebook, and blogs to gain insight on what was happening on the ground level and to connect affected people to the resources they needed more efficiently (Brito, 2014).
CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What are the characteristics of the #WhyIDidntReport network and how are they significant to storytelling and sharing on social media?

RQ2: How do sentiment and emotion influence the sense of support and community?

RQ3: What are the most popular themes for why people don’t report?

RQ4: What topics within comprehensive sex education could combat the issues presented in #WhyIDidntReport tweets?
CHAPTER 4. METHOD

The purpose of this study is to use social media analysis to analyze the #WhyIDidntReport network, the various factors that influence sexual assault victims’ ability to share their stories online, and explore issues with sexual assault reporting through victims’ perspectives to determine what factors impact reporting and utilization of sexual assault agencies in the U.S. The following method helped guide this research:

Sample

Hashtags are commonly used on Twitter, so I collected tweets for the dataset. To manage the sample size, the location and language filters limited the search to tweets from the U.S. that were written in English. The hashtag #WhyIDidntReport appeared on Twitter over 430,000 times between 9-1-18 and 12-31-18, which was enough for the sample size.

There were no demographic requirements for users’ tweets to be included in the sample, but Pew Research suggests that Twitter users present evenly across gender, income, and education levels. However, it should be noted that Twitter users tend to be younger and more racially diverse in comparison to the overall population of internet users (“Demographics of Social Media,” 2018).

A random sample was implemented as done in previous studies of this nature (Chew & Eysenbach, 2010; Collier, Son, & Nguyen, 2011; Kim et al., 2013)

Instrumentation

Social media analysis has become increasingly popular although it is still a new technique. More recently, it has been used in the study of health communication (Covolo, Ceretti, Passeri, Boletti, & Gelatti, 2017; Faasse, Chatman, & Martin, 2016; Keim-Malpass, Mitchell, Sun, & Kennedy, 2017; Meleo-Erwin, Basch, Maclean, Scheibner, & Cadoret, 2017).
Furini and Menegoni (2018, p. 51) believe “understanding of the expressiveness of the language used by people to converse about vaccinations allows us to create new public-health capabilities able to contrast partial/misleading information.” Betsch et al. (2012) showed, through language analysis, how the internet influences vaccination decisions because it alters the perceived personal risk of diseases or side effects. One study (Choudhury, Counts, & Horvitz, 2013) used crowdsourced Twitter data to train a classifier capable of predicting an individual’s vulnerability to depression (70% accuracy), which leads some researchers to believe that social media analysis can be used for social goods (Prandi, Roccetti, Salomoni, Nisi, & Nunes, 2016).

Crimson Hexagon (CH), a social media analysis tool, was used to collect data for this study. It has proven useful in a similar study of hashtags on Twitter (Harlow, 2019). This software was chosen over Twitter’s application programming interface (API) because The API caps the data at approximately 1%, whereas CH can sample 10,000 tweets per day of the search.

Procedures

Three types of analysis were done (i.e., network, sentiment, and emotion, and content analysis) to help reveal latent, underlying, or non-obvious issues that may be occurring on social media in the domain of sexual assault (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Network Analysis

To answer RQ1, a buzz monitor was set up on CH. The only search term necessary for this monitor was #whyididntreport because the whole network and all the interactions within it were being analyzed. For this reason, retweets, links, pictures, replies, and mentions did not need to be filtered out.

A random sample of 10,000 tweets was exported to a CSV Excel file to be uploaded to the Digital Methods Initiative Twitter Capture Analysis Tool (TCAT). The TCAT relies on
Twitter’s API to acquire data, which makes it subject to Twitter’s affordances and limitations (Borra & Rieder, 2014). Out of the 10,000 tweets uploaded to the TCAT, 1,464 were no longer accessible, making the final sample for this analysis 8,536 tweets.

The TCAT provides a set of outputs that focuses on network perspectives (Borra & Rieder, 2014). Launching the social graph by mentions output produces a GDF file based on interactions between users. If a user mentions another one, a directed link is created. This feature is used to analyze patterns in communication, find "hubs" and "communities," and categorize user accounts. The GDF file was opened in Gephi to produce a network visualization of #WhyIDidntReport users on Twitter.

All the nodes and edges of the network were uploaded to Gephi (see Appendix C for terminology) and the following steps were performed to get a visualization of the most prominent users:

1. The giant component filter was applied to remove any singular nodes from the graph, as they are not very informative. The filter gave a clearer picture of network influencers and characteristics.

2. A degree sub filter was added to remove any nodes that had less than three edges.

3. In the statistics tab, modularity was run from the statistics tab and partitioned to color code the various communities within the network.

4. Finally, the degree rank parameter resized the nodes in proportion to the number of degrees it had (i.e., users with more connections are bigger, users with less connections are smaller).

Data from the data laboratory was used to complete this analysis for this study.
Sentiment and Emotion Analysis

To answer RQ 2, the same buzz monitor was used because it had a sentiment and emotion analysis feature. The following filter was added: Categories: Basic Negative, Basic Positive; Emotions: Anger, Disgust, Fear, Joy, Sadness, Surprise; Post Type: Replies, Original Tweets to remove retweets (i.e., duplicate content) and neutral sentiments or emotions from the data. Neutral content was less than 20% of the analysis and typically consisted of links, news headlines, or general, sweeping statements, which findings didn’t prove had a significant impact on the data.

Like the previous analysis, the initial search produced 435,607 tweets related to #WhyIDidntReport. The filter left me with 52,230 relevant tweets.

CH can give a big picture analysis of sentiment and emotion around the hashtag #WhyIDidntReport, but it misses some of the nuances of human emotion, so further categorization and analysis were required to understand sentiment and emotion fully.

A discourse analysis was conducted to gauge the sense of community and support relating to sentiment and emotion on Twitter. In an informal analysis of tweets replies, I looked for characteristics that would support or deter victims from sharing their stories on social media. The characteristics of discourse were: (1) defending victims (2) words of support or encouragement for victims (3) story sharing by a victim (4) defending trolls (5) words of degradation towards victims. This provided more context for which sentiments and emotions were driving the network and how they influenced the senses of community and support around #WhyIDidntReport.
Content Analysis

To answer RQs 3 and 4, an opinion monitor was set up in CH to use the Brightview algorithm.

The hashtag #WhyIDidntReport was used as the basis for the search criteria because it intended to create awareness about reporting issues in sexual assault, and the hashtag was used by victims to share their stories. Analyzing the language used in the tweets was an essential component of this research to be able to capture real, lived experiences through storytelling or sharing.

I wanted to look at original tweets or stories being shared, so I used the following Boolean phrases to filter tweets: #whyididntreport AND -engagementType:RETWEET AND -(http OR https) AND -(RT OR republicans OR democrats OR dems OR trump OR "president" OR "brett kavanaugh" OR kavanaugh OR "dr. ford" OR "christine blasey ford" OR ford OR #cancelkavanaugh). The searched yielded 62,246 relevant tweets.

The same location, language, and date range filters that were used for the buzz monitor were used for the opinion monitor. Retweets were eliminated to minimize any duplicate content and to manage the sample size of the search. Tweets with pictures, videos, and links were removed to minimize any unrelated content, like news stories or memes.

As the spike in the use of #WhyIDidntReport was related to the confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court, filters were set to remove tweets related to the hearing and politics, as these topics are not the focus of the corresponding research questions.

By “training” posts, the BrightView algorithm automatically coded the tweets into categories characterized by me by dragging and dropping tweets that demonstrated the
characteristics for each category. As posts can only fit into one category, I carefully documented specific scenarios for each category to ensure mutual exclusivity.

After conducting a preliminary analysis, I determined that there are three main areas where victims can experience “failure” stopping them from reporting and getting the support they need.

*Systemic failure* includes tweets that mention abuse from public servants or figureheads (i.e., police, hospital workers, teachers, professors, clergy); reporting but nothing happening as a result and feeling helpless or defeated because of system statistics.

*Intrinsic failure* includes tweets that mention blocking out the experience; not being sure at the time; not wanting to burden or ruin others’ lives; feelings of guilt and shame; coercion because of one’s inability to negotiate the experience for themselves; feeling vulnerable because of their identity (i.e., race, age, ability); or feelings of fear of retribution or punishment.

*Relational failure* is characterized as coercion/threats from people close (i.e., bosses, partners, family members); someone close knowing or seeing and doing nothing; disclosing to someone and having it “swept under the rug”; loss of family or friends after disclosing; and thinking rape can’t happen between romantic partners.

I also coded an *off-topic* category for tweets that use the hashtag but didn’t narrate or describe an experience. For example, if someone tweeted “I feel bad for victims #WhyIDidntReport” or “Dr. Ford is brave, and I support her. #WhyIDidntReport,” they were not considered relevant for this research.

I created a filter to remove the off-topic tweets from the sample and exported a random sample of the three categories. To account for any potential errors made by the Brightview algorithm, I reviewed 100 tweets from each category and found almost no error (<1%).
To determine whether the themes identified on Twitter could be addressed through sex education, I will use Planned Parenthood’s *Get Real* comprehensive sex education curriculum (see Appendix D) to identify prevention and intervention topics that coincide with the content shared in the tweets.
CHAPTER 5. FINDINGS

To achieve the goals of this research, three types of analysis were conducted to inform different areas of sexual assault reporting and social media. Each type of analysis had a different purpose and required different criteria for each dataset. None of the samples were the same, but all the tweets came from the same initial search of the hashtag #WhyIDidntReport.

Network Analysis

Users of the #WhyIDidntReport network are connected by retweets and @mentions. I created a network visualization using Gephi. In order to answer RQ1, I exported the network data into excel to be able to sort and filter different variables. I also used algorithms in Gephi to run statistics about the network, nodes, and edges.

*RQ1: What are the characteristics of the #WhyIDidntReport network and how are they significant to storytelling and sharing on social media*

The network contains 8,618 nodes and 8,432 edges. Modularity and diameter are two measures that give an overview of the entire network. The modularity algorithm looks for communities or hubs that are more densely connected than the rest of the network. The modularity of this network is 0.923 with 1221 communities. Figure 1 displays the seven most densely connected communities, partitioned by color. The high number of communities within the network is not surprising because sexual assault transcends most demographic factors (Morgan & Truman, 2018). It’s only natural that people would become part of sub-communities that are more specific to their identity to help them navigate or cope in a way that will be beneficial to them. For instance, black, trans women who have experienced sexual assault and cisgender, black men who have experienced sexual assault have different lived experiences and therefore may want to connect with people they identify with for community and support. It is
important to note that all of the communities in the network are not necessarily in support of victims of sexual assault, and counterpublics contribute to network characteristics.

The diameter of the network is the furthest distance between any two nodes in the network. The diameter for the #WhyIDidntReport network is 4, which is low for such a large network. The average path length is a measure of efficiency of information in the network. With an average path length of 1.136, everyone in the network is, on average, less than two degrees away from everyone else in the network. The high number of communities could have segmented the network, making it less cohesive overall, but it did not reduce the efficiency of the network in any way. This shows that Twitter demonstrates the potential to connect users nationally, or even globally, and not just in a localized way.

![Visualization of #WhyIDidntReport retweet and mention network.](image)

**Figure 1.** Visualization of #WhyIDidntReport retweet and mention network. These graphs were generated in Gephi, using the Force Atlas 2 layout algorithm. Full network (left) and filtered network (right).

When it comes to influence and importance within a network, all nodes are not weighted the same (Riddell, Brown, Kovic, & Jauregui, 2017; Wang, Shi, Chen, & Peng, 2016). Looking at eigenvector centrality, in-degree centrality, and betweenness centrality, can provide a more
robust understanding of which nodes have influence within the network (Shulman, Yep, & Tomé, 2015).

Eigenvector centrality measures the weighted influence of a node in a network. This measure takes into account the perceived influence of a user based on the influence of their followers (Kiss & Bichler, 2008). Tarana Burke is the founder of the #MeToo movement, which would lead one to believe that she would have some influence in #WhyIDidntReport. Although the #MeToo movement did not reach critical mass until 2017 when Alyssa Milano shared her tweet, Burke’s celebrity has grown alongside the movement, which is why some influence from her was expected within the network. However, it was not present.

Alyssa Milano had a score of 1, meaning she was the main node connecting the network. This is a reasonable expectation as she is responsible for the #MeToo movement going viral and subsequently #WhyIDidntReport. Representative Joe Kennedy and a CBS journalist named Thomas Roberts also displayed high scores of .949601 and .935745 respectively. The scores drop significantly with the next highest being Donald Trump and an “ordinary” user with the handle @K_Rosa17.

Table 1 shows the top degree scores are also the same five individuals previously mentioned. This leads me to believe that the network is disproportionately centered around highly influential users even though the network is mostly made up of “ordinary” users.

In-degree centrality, unlike eigenvector centrality, gives each user equal weight and is an indicator of “prominence, prestige, and importance” (Riddell et al., 2017, p. 282). Only seven users had a degree score (i.e. the sum of in-degree and out-degree scores) greater than 100. In all seven cases the users had high in-degree scores and out-degree scores of 0 except for one user
who had a score of 1. This means that these users were being mentioned and retweeted at high levels, which is not the case for ordinary users.

Betweenness centrality measures the number of times a node bridges two other nodes, giving nodes with high betweenness centrality more control over how and which information is distributed in the network (Riddell et al., 2017). Out of all 8,618 nodes in the network only 153 of them had a betweenness centrality of 1 or more. Even though ordinary users made up most of the network, it seems that influence was more salient in connecting the network and disseminating information.

@womensmarch proved to have the most influence in the network by demonstrating the three types of centrality used to measure influence for this research. @sker4lyfe stood out as an ordinary user by being one of the highest contributors to the network in terms of number of tweets and having the highest betweenness centrality in the entire network.

Table 1. Scores for most influential users in the network vs. the highest contributors in the network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Influential Users (In-degree &amp; Eigenvector Centrality)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>User</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alyssa_milano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repjoekennedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thomasaroberts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>realdonaldtrump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k_rosa17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rudagert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>womensmarch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Influential Users (Betweenness Centrality)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>User</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sker4lyfe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>womensmarch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theauthor_bjm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cybold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aynrandpaulryan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28
These characteristics are significant to storytelling and sharing for a few reasons. First, between 9-21-18 and 9-24-18 the hashtag was used 382,290 times. The influential members of the network were able to develop a shared meaning and function of the hashtag that would define how it would be used by ordinary users moving forward.

Being able to track the network through the hashtag creates a realization about sexual assault that is hard to imagine in an offline space. Not only can users search the hashtag to see the magnitude of the issue, but they’re also seeing stories and experiences that are similar or familiar to them, which may be why they felt they, too, could share their story without being ostracized and, instead, supported.

Ordinary users are important to the network because they make up a majority of the network and their mass makes the network relevant, but centralizing the network around influential users, although maybe not intentionally, is important because people feel like they are sharing their story with someone who has the influence and power to take action.

Finally, the closeness of the network indicates that users need to feel a sense of community before they can be vulnerable in an online space. We see in Figure 1 that the center of the network is very clustered and even though it spreads, each node has at least one neighboring node that connect them to the rest of the network.

**Sentiment and Emotion Analysis**

Sentiment and emotion of the entire network were measured to get a sense of the public opinion regarding #WhyIDidntReport. Sexual assault is a pervasive societal issue and determining the level of support, or lack of, will help inform whether social change is feasible based on prevailing attitudes.
The following research question delves into nuances around sentiment and emotion so they can be explained with more context:

**RQ2: How do sentiment and emotion around #WhyIDidntReport influence the senses of support and community for victims on Twitter?**

CH was able to identify 77% and 78% of sentiment and emotion respectively. The prevailing sentiment and emotions were negative, but this does not largely reflect feelings or criticism towards victims of sexual assault.

![Sentiment and emotion of tweets using #WhyIDidntReport—filtered neutral](image)

**Figure 2.** Sentiment and emotion of tweets using #WhyIDidntReport—filtered neutral

Figure 2 shows that negative sentiment and negative emotions prevail in this case. If we look at a brand like Apple, and their monitor shows negative sentiment and emotions, it’s more likely than not they’re in a crisis. For a “brand” like #WhyIDidntReport, that relates to a topic like sexual assault, that is inherently bad, we want people to be sad about it or feel disgust toward the issue because those negative emotions are what will drive change in this instance.

The level of support for the movement will be contingent on a tweet-by-tweet basis. There are several combinations of sentiment and emotion that produce different meanings. For example, Figure 3 shows two tweets that both displayed negative sentiment and sadness as their emotion.
Figure 3. Tweets displaying negative sentiment and sadness in different contexts

The @wokehillbilly uses words like “devastated” to explain how they feel toward the narratives being shared, and words like “believed” and “loved” to show support for victims. On the other hand, @JoseCor50922520 refers to supporters of #WhyIDidntreport as “deceitful” and “shady.” They also use the hashtag #ConfirmKavanaugh, which puts them as a supporter of an alleged perpetrator.

To look at how sentiment and emotion influenced a sense of support or community for victims I informally looked at the sentiment and emotion for original tweets and then characteristics in the replies of the original tweet that would support or deter victims. In most instances, reply threads had negative sentiment and sadness or disgust as the emotion. The characteristics of the replies typically consisted of words of support and encouragement for victims, defense of victims, or victims who felt compelled to share their story.

Social media “trolls” do exist, but they failed in overtaking the discourse on Twitter. Wikipedia defines trolling as “creating discord on the internet by starting quarrels or upsetting people by posting inflammatory or off-topic messages in an online community.” Trolls seem to
need the comfort of anonymity to be able to openly speak out against victims of sexual assault as it is the unpopular public opinion.

Content Analysis

*RQ3: What are the most popular themes for why people don’t report?*

The preliminary analysis of the tweets helped with identifying three major themes within sexual assault reporting. The themes had to be pre-defined, so the tweets could be trained to fit in the appropriate category, but a post-analysis of the tweets demonstrated that all relevant tweets were appropriately sorted into either the systemic, relational, or intrinsic failure categories.

“Failure” in this sense refers to an individual’s lack of knowledge or resources to be able to have a full understanding of sexual assault or the self-efficacy to negotiate sexual encounters. To clarify, this does not place blame on individuals for their own sexual assaults. It does acknowledge that there are stereotypes and stigmas associated with sex and sexual assaults that contribute to longstanding, systemic inadequacies that allow sexual assault to exist.

The initial categories were broad and do not say much that is not already known about sexual assault and why people don’t report. A deeper dive into the tweets, which are essentially 140-character narratives about sexual assault, can tell us more about each of the themes.

*Systemic Failure*

Tweets that demonstrated *systemic failure* accounted for 12% of all relevant tweets. In comparison to the other two categories, this percentage is quite low, but still shocking that people who are supposed to be a part of the system that combats sexual assault are blind to the reality and magnitude of sexual assault or are perpetrators themselves.

In many instances, the assaults were reported and subsequently minimized by police, hospital workers, teachers, and other public servants or figureheads. A lot of tweets alluded to
the idea that the victim was made to feel at fault for their own assault, that the perpetrator’s life could be ruined, or that they would eventually get over it. One person tweeted:

#WhyIDidntReport The police officer I spoke to said, and I quote, "Are you sure you want to report this? It could ruin his life, you know." I was diagnosed with PTSD after the attack. Six years later, I still live with it.

Another wrote:

First question I was asked by police when I reported was, " am I sure I didn't lead him on to think it was ok? " #WhyIDidntReport #WomensRights #KavanaughHearings

These two tweets reference experiences with police officers, but other groups like nurses, counselors, and community advocates are sometimes the biggest perpetuators of stereotypes and stigmas regarding sexual assault.

Being a part of a group or in close proximity to a group does not mean that implicit bias has been removed and everyone who comes forward will be treated the same. There are various intersecting identities (e.g. age, race, gender, SES) that influence how people perceive the victim.

This hints at the need for staff in various sectors meant to support victims to undergo implicit bias training and implement anti-oppressive policies and procedures that will allow for objectivity and fairness.

Another issue that arose was going through the process to seek justice is long and doesn’t ensure accountability of the perpetrator. For a lot of victims, the process is re-traumatizing and regrettably not worth it in the end. Statistically, perpetrators are largely not held accountable with only 3 out of every 100 perpetrators spending one day in prison ("The Criminal Justice System," n.d.). One user outlines her experience seeking justice by tweeting:

I did report only because I was so badly injured I had to go to the hospital. The staff reported it and the police came. Almost two years later and we still haven't gone to trial. My life is in limbo. #WhyIDidntReport
Another user outlines an experience where we can’t be sure if she got passed reporting the assault to be able to take any other action because her experience with the cops was discouraging:

#WhyIDidntReport I did report and I wish I hadn't. Honestly, if you would have told me that all the cops would do is make me feel awful, insinuate I was a slut, and then do absolutely nothing but call me once a week to pressure me to drop the case, I wouldn't have reported.

Lastly, identity was a reoccurring theme in the tweets. A lot of people felt ashamed because of their identity or felt there were no resources to support their identity. One man didn’t report because he was raped by another man and was too embarrassed to say anything. A trans woman tweeted about an experience she had with people who were supposed to be a resource and there to help her:

#WhyIDidntReport: Because I was victim shamed/blamed based on my identity as a trans woman by SANE nurses, police officers and even some victim's advocates in the past. Because no one at DV or SA organizations/shelters are trans-inclusive and discriminate heavily.

Identity-specific resources and services may be the difference between someone utilizing victim-service agencies or not. It may not be feasible to service all identities in the community, but victim-service agencies should have an idea of what communities need services or resources but are currently being under served or un-served.

The last theme that was present was people being raped by someone in a position of power. In these instances, victims essentially have nowhere to seek resources because they are often afraid of retaliation. Retaliation is even more likely for people with cognitive illness. A user shared:

@TheEllenShow #WhyIDidntReport I was 16 in a psych hospital & was raped by a staff member while being drug tested. I told his supervisor and my counselor. Both said no one would believe me because of the meds they had me on. I'd love to be able to tell my story & help others.
Relational Failure

Relational failure accounted for 39% of the sample. These were instances where people were manipulated by someone close to them or they disclosed their assault to someone close and received no support.

A lot of cases under this category were related to age, either because they were too young to have received any sex education or their families refused to talk about sex. This is connected to longstanding, antiquated beliefs about sex. There were hundreds of instances where users shared stories about not understanding that it was assault until they were older. One user wrote:

#WhyIdidntReport I was 5, 6, 7 years old. I was confused, scared and in denial. It was a relative, who I had see repeatedly. It took me 10 years to speak about it. Family and “friends” shook it off like the elephant in the room. I think that hurts more, loved ones disregarding it

In other instances, families participated in “cover ups” of the abuse.

@realDonaldTrump He was my uncle. My mother's brother. I blocked it out and there are still things that I can't put together. It's the last thing a woman wants to talk about, really. My grandfather put him on a plane. Never discussed it again. #WhyIDidntReport

A lot of tweets demonstrated a lack of understanding about boundaries and healthy relationships. People could not properly navigate situations with significant others, partners, or close friends. In one user’s horrifying account she writes:

We were married. I was asleep. Woke up during. Fought him, told him to stop, he laughed at my 108lbs kicking, scratching & hitting 210lbs of mountain & muscle. He insisted nobody would believe me because a husband can't rape his wife.
#WhyIDidntReport

Another victim also found herself in a situation with her husband that resulted in being ostracized for finally deciding to report. Despite her husband’s violent behavior toward her there was no support from friends, probably because they lack knowledge about boundaries and healthy relationships, too. She explains:
#WhyIDidntReport Because he was my husband and nobody believed me because we were married and a husband couldn’t rape his wife. I finally did report it when he almost killed me and still some people sided with him. Lost a lot of friends 💔

Intrinsic Failure

At 49%, intrinsic failure was the highest ranked theme. I attribute this to stereotypes and stigmas around sexual assault that deter people from disclosing to anyone. The combination of the lack of sex education and glaring examples of what can go wrong when reporting, silently perpetuate the system of sexual assault.

In almost all cases victims feel shame and guilt, but in some cases, it stops the victims from doing anything at all. In the tweet below, we see that some people live with those negative feelings for a long time before saying anything. An older woman wrote:

It was in the 50 early 60s my mother wouldn’t of believed & you feel shame & being afraid of what’s happening right now. The predators are dead now I didn’t tell anyone till I was 65 to my counselor I am 69 now & most people still don’t know. #WhyIDidntReport

The idea of “silence” will hopefully disappear with new generations. #MeToo has transformed the conversations about sexual assault. There is more awareness and comfortability talking about the issue now. There is no evidence to prove that the increase in conversations and disclosures is because of the #MeToo. However, the Criminal Victimization report for 2017 suggests that the two are correlated (Morgan & Truman, 2018).

A lot of victims don’t want to be burden or feel like they ruined someone’s life, so they often give their perpetrator a second chance in the form of silence because their perpetrator made a “mistake” or they’re a “good person.” One user tweeted:

@HayleyGonso And I didn’t want to ruin his life because we were so young....I didn’t want to ruin HIS life. #WhyIDidntReport
Society has a bad habit of putting certain groups of people (e.g., athletes, celebrities) above doing the right thing. And some people in or close to those groups feel entitled to that. Brock Turner was a Stanford University swimmer charged with multiple counts of sexual assault. His father referred to the rape committed by his son as “20 minutes of action,” and didn’t believe his son’s life deserved to be ruined by going to prison. His belief likely fueled by the protectionism of athletes in western culture.

*RQ4: What topics within comprehensive sex education could combat the issues presented in #WhyIDidntReport tweets?*

Sex education in schools is a controversial issue. Questions of appropriateness and morality often plague school administrators causing them to almost ignore it all together. These beliefs are antiquated as they leave children and youth without any awareness about sexual assault or how to navigate potential encounters.

*Get Real* is an evidence-based, comprehensive sex education curriculum offered by Planned Parenthood for middle and high schoolers. This program highlights social and emotional skills as key components of healthy relationships and responsible decision making. To analyze the topics covered in the curriculum I only used the lesson topics for grades 6-8 (see Appendices D, E, & F). Although the curriculum focuses on topics like reproductive health, media literacy, protection methods, and STDs/STIs, Table 2 outlines topics that are more closely related to sexual assault that would be particularly helpful in minimizing incidents of sexual assault.
### Table 2. Lesson topics with focus areas that coincide with sexual assault prevention and intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Topic</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication and Refusal Skills</td>
<td>Communication skills, refusal tactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships and Boundaries</td>
<td>Identifying relationship circles, qualities of healthy and unhealthy relationships, establishing boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstinence</td>
<td>Choosing not to participate in sexual activity, benefits of delaying sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making and Values</td>
<td>Make responsible decisions, reduce unhealthy behaviors, understand risks with different choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender and Sexual Identity</td>
<td>Explore stereotypes, understand attraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deciding About Sexual Behavior</td>
<td>Examine decisions around sexual behaviors, what dating means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships</td>
<td>Healthy and unhealthy relationships, power and control, equality in relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusal Skills</td>
<td>Refusal and negotiation skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Get Real* provides a sample lesson plan for Communication and Refusal Skills (see Appendix F). The goals of this lesson are to: (1) Demonstrate use of skills for effective communication. (2) Name reasons why assertive communication is important. (3) Demonstrate refusal skills in role-play. Someone who tweeted, “#WhyIDidntReport The next time, i was dating him. I told him i wasn’t ready and he told me if i loved him i would let him do it,” might have had a different experience had they had an opportunity to acquire a skill like assertive communication.
CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION

This study shows how we can surveil and respond to social issues in a responsible manner. Platforms like Twitter have given people the ability to share their stories and experience community and support. A robust API allows us to mine data from these platforms in different ways.

In the following section I will make recommendation a solution for sexual assault prevention and intervention and protocols for victim-service agencies, discuss limitations of this research, and provide suggestions for future research.

Education is Key

Longitudinal studies on sexual assault education have focused on programs targeted toward women, with little consistency about the effectiveness of the programs in reducing sexual victimizations (Breitenbecher & Gidycz, 1999; Breitenbecher & Scarce, 1999; Hanson & Gidycz; 1993). Everyone is a potential victim and a potential perpetrator of sexual assault. While sexual assault is typically experienced by women, it is not only experienced by women, and by not educating some groups about what sexual assault is they remain ignorant to how they may be experiencing victimization or how they are perpetrating violence against another group.

The CDC cites sexual health as a “positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.” A report by the Center for American Progress revealed that sex education standards in the U.S. are inadequate (Shapiro & Brown, 2018). Only 20 states mandate medically, factually, and technically accurate sex education (Shapiro & Brown, 2018). While most states teach lessons around abstinence or sexual activity after marriage (Lindberg, Maddow-Zimet, & Boonstra, 2016).
The report also notes that only 10 states even mention the words “healthy relationship,” “sexual assault,” or “consent” in their programs (Shapiro & Brown, 2018). Sex education curriculums have not evolved to include consent and healthy relationships, despite research that shows programs that use fear tactics and teach abstinence-only have adverse effects on teen pregnancy and STDs (Stanger-Hall & Hall, 2011).

A child’s first lesson in consent is not going to be related to a sexual experience, but perhaps teaching them to ask permission before touching or hugging another person. There are so many lessons encompassed in sex education that don’t start with or are exclusive to sex. The younger we can teach children simple concepts related to sex education the easier it will be for them grasp more complex topics. It’s irresponsible to not teach children about healthy relationships, communication, intimacy, consent, and sexual assault prevention. All topics that have a direct impact on how people make safe and healthy choices during their entire lifetime.

A future with less rape and sexual assault requires sex to be talked about freely, without stigma, and between parents and children. If parents don’t create a space for dialogue around sex, children and teens will learn about sex from other peers, TV, the internet, and wherever they can fulfil their curiosities about sex. This is dangerous as they are susceptible to misinformation which will only confuse them more, leaving them more susceptible to victimization.

Social Media Engagement for Victim-Service Agencies

While the hashtag #WhyIDidntReport doesn’t have a “home,” the viral nature of the hashtag captured abundant and diverse information regarding problems with sexual assault reporting without having to prod victims. Command centers are often large investments for bigger companies and institutions, that victim-service agencies might not have the resources for. A command center for victim-service agencies are likely to be smaller and may have to leverage
free or low-cost ways (e.g., Twitter’s API) to mine data on social media. However, agencies should develop a social media engagement strategy that outlines protocols for engaging on social media and contributes to organizational goals and objectives.

Agencies should assign one or two people to handle the agency social media. This will help with long-term consistency and accountability. It can be an employee or a trusted volunteer, but they do not need to be social media experts and should have a basic understanding of different platforms.

Agencies can use proactive engagement, reactive engagement, or disengagement to be successful in online spaces. Proactive engagement is where agencies insert themselves into relevant conversations. By searching the hashtag #WhyIDidntReport, agencies can identify individuals and groups who are engaging with them in an indirect way by using a hashtag that is closely aligned with sexual assault work. Agencies should not make any assumptions about a users’ identity, experience with sexual assault, or how they use anonymity and privacy settings on Twitter. Users should be approached privately and with caution in order to facilitate a relationship that individuals can be comfortable with.

Agencies should have easily digestible content that is accurate and aesthetically appealing on hand. The content should vary in specificity from general to specific. Just because an agency is reaching out in private does not mean that they should not equip users with content/tools that users can choose to make public. At that point, users may have more questions or want follow-up information, or they may not need the information, but they are happy to pass it along. Doing this gives every user the agency encounters the option to be an advocate for the agency. The initial message should say something like, “Hello, We saw you used #WhyIDidntReport on Twitter. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual assault, we
offer resources and services that can help. Feel free to share this information with someone who may need it,” along with an infographic that dispels myths about assault, or the ways victims can informally report.

Engaging in conversations with influencers or brands (i.e., verified accounts) can also garner attention for the agency and start dialogue about important issues within sexual assault reporting. Figure 4 demonstrates an example from the LSU Women’s Center’s Period Project. The Women’s Center retweeted a funny video from @attn related to periods and used it as an opportunity to promote their initiative. Women’s Center posts typically get 2-4 likes and retweets all together. Responding to a page that has over 100,000 followers increased those numbers significantly.

Figure 4. The LSU Women’s Center Period Project Twitter post example
Reactive engagement will occur when agencies receive direct messages, replies, or @mentions. This engagement is different because agencies do not have much control over the information directed toward them, but they should still engage to foster relationships. The agencies will have to decide if they want to use any tools to manage incoming information, if they reply to all of the information directed toward them and if not then what instances would they not respond; and when it is appropriate to pass along information and what the process will be for making sure any questions or requests have been fulfilled.

Finally, not all engagement is good for an organization. Disengagement is when agencies don’t respond to taunting, vulgar or aggressive comments. Trolls often work to get a reaction from people and the best practice is to delete the reply or report it without responding. There is no evidence suggesting that polarized or opposing views can be changed through a Twitter argument, it will only take away from the agency’s efforts to disseminate information that is helpful to victims. This practice is also done to avoid emotional distress victims may feel from seeing disapproving comments and avoiding physical harm in a case where an aggressive user may know where an agency is located or who the employees are.

**Limitations**

This study contained some limitations. First, I ran into some issues with my initial method that constrained the amount of time I had with this data. IRB was requiring that I undergo full review to be able to interview victims of sexual assault. Even with the constraint, I believe the method used in this study was a more effective and insightful method. I would love to have had more time to mine the data and potentially add to my current analysis.

One of the issues with a network is that it produces a large data set that can only be sampled by social media analysis tools making it hard to manage. The search may also pull posts
that are no longer accessible or that are not relevant. It is not feasible or rational to look at each post individually when that is the purpose of the analysis tool, but it was necessary to look at a small sample to make sure the tweets were generally on par with the research. In some cases where further analysis was required, I had to do an informal analysis that did not yield specific numbers regarding categorizations.

Finally, I needed to use two types of monitors with three different search criteria, so even though all three samples were pulled from the same pool, they all contained different tweets because of various filters. I’m not sure how this influences that data, but I did my best to make sure each sample was representative and relevant to the research question.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

My suggestions for future research would be to conduct semi-structured, in-depth interviews after analyzing the Crimson Hexagon data to corroborate the findings. A snowball sampling method would be used to recruit participants as that type of sampling helps when studying hard-to-reach populations especially if they are underground or hidden (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). It has also been cited as an appropriate tool when looking at sensitive or private issues (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981, p. 141).

Each interview would last 30-45 minutes and would be recorded, transcribed using Rev and processed afterward. It would be interesting to see grounded theory used in this instance because its focus is to understand, explain, and/or predict human behavior (Jacelon & Odell, 2005).

The interviews would focus on victims’ perceptions of being able to share their stories on social media and they’re feelings about community and support on social media. Gaining a deeper understanding of motivations for sharing about sensitive topics and feelings people
experience will hopefully eliminate the need for interviews and inform what data researchers should mine when surveilling social issues on social media.

Subsequent research should also analyze evaluation responses from students as they are participating and after they have completed Get Real. These responses can provide insight about what students can demonstrate they understand about the curriculum and if what they have learned has had any impact on their experiences with sexual assault.
CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

Sexual assault is a pervasive, societal issue that has recently been brought to the forefront of society through the #MeToo movement on social media. This research sought to identify barriers for reporting sexual assault by analyzing the hashtag #WhyIDidntReport. The findings of this study highlighted some important aspects of the network for everyone who has participated, whether they were supporters of the movement or not.

A full network analysis showed that the hashtag produced a lot of different communities within the network that were densely connected. Despite the number of communities, the network was not splintered and was highly efficient. It was also structurally centered around influential users who were able to create a shared meaning for the hashtag and subsequently drive the conversation around reporting issues. These network characteristics were significant to victims’ abilities to share their stories on Twitter because high levels of support and community prioritized victims’ voices.

Even though characteristics of dialogic communication are not always present on social media, platforms like Twitter have proven to be viable for hosting a supportive and uplifting communities for victims of sexual assault. In looking at sentiment and emotion, we realize that the public is favorable towards victims of sexual assault even though negative sentiment and emotions prevailed. An informal look at the discourse in tweet replies also provided insight on which sentiments and emotions were driving the conversation and how different characteristics could encourage or deter victims from sharing their stories.

An analysis of conflicts in #WhyIDidntReport tweets coincide with topics in Planned Parenthood’s Get Real curriculum. The solution to a lot of issues within sexual assault is to expose people to evidence-based, accurate prevention and intervention methods through
comprehensive sex education in schools. Learning about things like communication skills, refusal tactics, healthy relationships, and responsible decision making will contribute to more knowledge about sex and relationship but are also transferable skills that contribute to better overall interpersonal relationships.

Conducting different types of analysis allowed me to mine data and gain insights about a vulnerable population. These insights can inform agencies about trends and themes and how to make agency improvements without prodding victims of sexual assault. I believe as analysis tools improve and more diverse data is available, it will allow agencies to be proactive in their efforts to support victims in their communities, thus improving their organization-public relationships.
REFERENCES


Brito, M. (2014). Your brand, the next media company: How a social business strategy enables better content, smarter marketing, and deeper customer relationships. INpolis, IN: Que.


Appendix A

Traffic to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s Page About Sexual Harassment from April to August 2017

Source: The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
Graphic: Jiachuan Wu / NBC News
### Appendix B

Table of percent rate and victimizations reported to the police, by type of crime, 2016 and 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of crime</th>
<th>Percent reported</th>
<th>Victimization rate reported per 1,000&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent crime&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape/sexual assault&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>40.4&lt;sup&gt;f&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>44.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggravated assault</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>57.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simple assault</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>41.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domestic violence&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>47.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intimate partner violence&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger violence</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent crime involving injury</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>52.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serious violent crime&lt;sup&gt;f&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>53.0%</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serious domestic violence&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>48.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serious intimate partner violence&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Serious stranger violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serious violent crime involving a weapon</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious violent crime involving injury</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>54.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Property crime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Household burglary</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motor vehicle theft</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>79.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other theft&lt;sup&gt;g&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Violent crime classifications include rape or sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault, and they include threatened, attempted, and completed crimes. Other violent crime categories in this table, including domestic violence and violent crime involving injury, are not mutually exclusive from these classifications. See appendix table 8 for standard errors.

*Comparison year.
†Significant difference from comparison year at the 95% confidence level.
‡Significant difference from comparison year at the 90% confidence level.
§Rates are per 1,000 persons age 12 or older for violent crime and per 1,000 households for property crime.
†Includes homicide because the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) is based on interviews with victims and cannot measure murder.
‡See Methodology for details on the measurement of rape or sexual assault in the NCVS.
†Includes victimization committed by intimate partners and family members.
‡Includes victimization committed by current or former spouses, boyfriends, or girlfriends.
§Includes rape or sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault.
¶Includes the taking or attempted unlawful taking of property or cash without personal contact with the victim.

Appendix C

Network Terminology Used on Network Analysis and Visualization Software Gephi

Basic Network Terminology

- **Vertex** - A vertex is simply drawn as a node or a dot.
- **Edge** - An edge (a set of two elements) is drawn as a line connecting two vertices, called endpoints or end vertices or end vertices.
  - **Directed Edge** - A directed edge is an ordered pair of nodes that can be represented graphically as an arrow drawn between the nodes.
  - **Undirected Edge** - An undirected edge disregards any sense of direction and treats both nodes interchangeably.
- **Node Degree** - The degree of a node in a network is the number of connections it has to other nodes and the degree distribution is the probability distribution of these degrees over the whole network.
  - **Out Degree** - The number of edges leaving a vertex.
  - **In Degree** - The number of edges entering a vertex.
- **Size** - The size of a graph is the number of its edges.
- **Weight** - A weighted graph associates a label (weight) with every edge in the graph. Weights are usually real numbers. The weight of an edge is often referred to as the "cost" of the edge. In applications, the weight may be a measure of the length of a route, the capacity of a line, the energy required to move between locations along a route, etc.

Network Overview

- **Average Degree** - Average number of links per node.
- **Average Weighted Degree** - Average of sum of weights of the edges of nodes.
- **Distance** - The distance between two nodes is defined as the number of edges along the shortest path connecting them.
- **Average Distance** - The Average of distance between all pairs of nodes.
- **Network Diameter** - The maximum distance between any pair of nodes in the graph.
- **Modularity** - Modularity is one measure of the structure of networks or graphs. It was designed to measure the strength of division of a network into modules (also called groups, clusters or communities). Networks with high modularity have dense connections between the nodes within modules but sparse connections between nodes in different modules.
- **Connected Components** - A connected component (or just component) of an undirected graph is a subgraph in which any two vertices are connected to each other by paths, and which is connected to no additional vertices in the supergraph.

Node Overview

- **Clustering Coefficient** - A clustering coefficient is a measure of the degree to which nodes in a graph tend to cluster together.
- **Centrality** - Centrality refers to indicators which identify the most important vertices within a graph. Applications include identifying the most influential person(s) in a social
network, key infrastructure nodes in the Internet or urban networks, and super spreaders of disease.
  
  o **Closeness Centrality** - In connected graphs there is a natural distance metric between all pairs of nodes, defined by the length of their shortest paths. The farness of a node is defined as the sum of its distances to all other nodes, and its closeness is defined as the reciprocal of the farness. Thus, the more central a node is the lower its total distance to all other nodes.
  
  o **Betweenness Centrality** - Betweenness is a centrality measure of a vertex within a graph (there is also edge betweenness, which is not discussed here). Betweenness centrality quantifies the number of times a node acts as a bridge along the shortest path between two other nodes.
  
  o **Eigenvector Centrality** - Eigenvector centrality is a measure of the influence of a node in a network. It assigns relative scores to all nodes in the network based on the concept that connections to high-scoring nodes contribute more to the score of the node in question than equal connections to low-scoring nodes.

**Edge Overview**

- **Average Path Length** - Average path length is defined as the average number of steps along the shortest paths for all possible pairs of network nodes. It is a measure of the efficiency of information or mass transport on a network.
Appendix D

Table of Contents for *Get Real* Comprehensive Sex Education Curriculum

Middle School, Second Edition, Table of Contents

**Grade 6 Lessons**

**Lesson 6-1: Creating the Classroom Climate**
Classroom expectations and group rights and responsibilities are established. Students are introduced to the key Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills they will focus on in the program: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making. Students play a game to get to know each other and begin to become comfortable talking about sexuality in the class. They brainstorm caring adults to whom they can turn with questions or concerns.

**Lesson 6-2: Communication and Refusal Skills**
Students are introduced to effective communication skills and practice active listening and assertive communication. They discuss refusal tactics and various refusal techniques that can help them say “no” clearly and effectively, as well as the importance of respecting another person’s refusal.

**Lesson 6-3: Relationships and Boundaries**
Students examine relationships and identify the different relationship circles in their lives. They explore the idea of physical boundaries and the importance of respecting others’ personal space. Then they discuss qualities of healthy versus unhealthy relationships, including some of the risks of young people dating older partners. They practice communication skills for establishing clear boundaries and resisting peer pressure.

**Lesson 6-4: Anatomy and Reproduction: The Penis and Related Parts**
This lesson on reproductive anatomy and physiology focuses on the penis and related parts. Students test their knowledge and then review and label parts of the reproductive system using a poster and handout. The teacher explains how pregnancy occurs, and the role of condoms in preventing pregnancy. Then students play a game to review what they’ve learned.

**Lesson 6-5: Anatomy and Reproduction: The Vagina and Related Parts**
This lesson on reproductive anatomy and physiology focuses on the vagina and related parts. Students test their knowledge and then review and label the parts of the reproductive system using a poster and handout. The teacher explains the processes of ovulation and menstruation. Then students play a game to review what they’ve learned.

**Lesson 6-6: Puberty**
Students examine the physical and emotional changes of puberty, identifying which changes are related to a particular sex assigned at birth and which happen to most young people. They explore the range of feelings young people going through puberty might have in a variety of situations.

**Lesson 6-7: Abstinence**
This lesson introduces abstinence—choosing not to participate in any sexual behaviors that can result in pregnancy or STI. Students brainstorm examples of risky or unhealthy behaviors in general and examine the concept of abstaining to protect one’s health. They examine motivations for becoming sexually active and the benefits of delaying sex. They apply their learning by giving advice to the characters in different scenarios on how to remain abstinent in pressure situations.
Lesson 6-8: Decision Making and Values
Students discuss how responsible decision making reduces unhealthy behaviors. They examine their personal values around a variety of situations and discuss how values affect behavior choices. They learn a decision-making model that can help them understand the risks of various choices and how to use their values and short-term goals to support responsible and healthy decisions.

Lesson 6-9: Grade 6 Conclusion and Review
This culminating lesson reviews the topics covered in Get Real Grade 6 and reinforces the importance of abstinence and refusal skills. Students develop a character case study and role-play the refusal skills this character could use in a sexual pressure situation to make a healthy decision. They consider messages about sexuality they could give to someone younger to promote healthy choices.

Grade 7

Lesson 7-1: Creating the Classroom Climate
Classroom expectations and group rights and responsibilities are established. Students review the key Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills they will focus on in the program: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making. They review the decision-making model by applying the steps to a scenario, and brainstorm caring adults and other resources they can go to with questions or concerns. They also play a game to review sexual and reproductive anatomy.

Lesson 7-2: Media Literacy and Sexuality
This lesson focuses on media literacy and sexuality. Students identify different types of media and discuss the ways sexuality is portrayed on television. They examine the effects of advertising on body image and critique an ad to understand how it uses sexuality and people’s insecurities to sell a product.

Lesson 7-3: Gender and Sexual Identity
In this lesson on gender and sexual identity, students explore stereotypes around gender and sexuality, and then review definitions of various terms related to gender and sexual identity. They use a visualization to explore characteristics of attraction and what it feels like to be attracted to someone.

Lesson 7-4: Creating a Safe School Environment
With the intention of creating a safe school environment, students clarify their understanding and values around bullying. They define harassment and discuss what it means to be an ally who supports others’ rights, using a scenario case study. Then they practice identifying and stopping harassment using role-plays.

Lesson 7-5: Deciding About Sexual Behavior
Students examine risks and decisions around sexual behaviors in this lesson. They begin by defining different sexual behaviors and examining factors that influence a person’s decision to engage in these behaviors. Then they categorize various behaviors according to the risk they pose for pregnancy and STI transmission. The lesson concludes with a discussion of what dating means and the kinds of dating activities seventh graders can safely enjoy.
Get Real Middle School, Second Edition, Table of Contents (continued)

Lesson 7-6: Defining and Maintaining Abstinence
In this lesson, students define abstinence—choosing not to participate in any sexual behaviors that can result in pregnancy or STI—and analyze which behaviors fit this definition. They determine their own abstinence guidelines and how the concept of postponement can help them avoid engaging in sexual behaviors until they are older. They review key components of refusal skills, including avoiding alcohol and other drug use and respecting a partner’s boundaries, and practice responding to challenges to abstinence.

Lesson 7-7: Introduction to Sexually Transmitted Infections
Students learn about STIs (sexually transmitted infections) and how they are prevented. After defining STI and reviewing some statistics, the teacher reviews various STIs, including modes of transmission, which can be treated and which can be cured. Students identify important ways to prevent or avoid STIs, and then participate in a handshake demonstration to model how STIs can spread based on the number of sexual partners a person has.

Lesson 7-8: Introduction to Protection Methods
After reviewing abstinence as a safe and effective choice for people their age, students discuss questions people should consider before becoming sexually active and reasons to use protection. They learn about various protection methods and the effectiveness rates of different methods. They review why condoms are the one method besides abstinence that protects against both unplanned pregnancy and STI transmission, place the steps to correct condom use in the proper order, and watch a condom demonstration by the teacher. They also review how hormonal contraceptive methods work and the different forms of emergency contraception.

Lesson 7-9: Grade 7 Conclusion and Review
This culminating lesson reviews the potential consequences of sexual activity and the decision-making model. Students also practice skills for refusals and negotiating condom use through role-plays. They reflect on ways that negotiation and refusal skills will help them keep themselves safe.

Grade 8

Lesson 8-1: Creating the Classroom Climate
Classroom expectations and group rights and responsibilities are established. Students review the key Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills taught in the program: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making. They complete a “roadmap to resources” in which they identify people and places they could go to for questions about sexuality or relationships, and review the decision-making model by applying the steps to a scenario.

Lesson 8-2: Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships
Students explore the characteristics of healthy versus unhealthy relationships. They are introduced to two diagrams that present the different characteristics associated with power and control in unhealthy relationships and those associated with equality in healthy relationships. Then they analyze scenarios to identify the aspects of power and control and/or equality depicted in each. To personalize the learning, students make their own plan for having a healthy relationship.
Lesson 8-3: Addressing Obstacles to Abstinence
After reviewing the definitions of abstinence and postponement, students identify positive outcomes of abstinence and suggest strategies for making it effective. They brainstorm obstacles to abstinence and write advice columns to a teen who wishes to remain abstinent.

Lesson 8-4: Comprehensive Protection Methods
This lesson reviews protection methods. Abstinence is reinforced as a healthy and safe choice for eighth graders, and students discuss why protection is important when a person decides to become sexually active. Students play a game to review what they know about various contraceptive methods, and are shown samples of the methods, including a condom demonstration by the teacher. They explore obstacles to condom use and reasons for using condoms. As homework, they create a 1-page fact sheet on one of the protection methods they’ve learned about.

Lesson 8-5: STI/HIV Transmission
In this lesson, a simulation introduces students to patterns of STI transmission, then students examine feelings and responsibilities associated with STIs. They discuss the risk of multiple partners and compare how sequential versus concurrent partners affects transmission of STIs. Students examine the risk of various behaviors, and review the importance of testing. They review facts about HIV transmission in preparation for the speaker presentation in the next class.

Lesson 8-6: Living with HIV
In this lesson, students hear a presentation by and participate in a question-and-answer session with a speaker who is living with HIV (or watch a video featuring people living with HIV). They reflect on the experience by writing a thank-you letter to the speaker (or a letter to someone in the video). As homework, they create HIV awareness posters that contain information about modes of transmission, how to get tested and ways to reduce risk.

Lesson 8-7: Refusal Skills
Students debrief the speaker presentation or the video from the last class. Then they review communication, refusal and negotiation skills and practice these skills using roleplays with different scenarios involving both resisting pressure to have sex and maintaining abstinence and negotiation of protection methods.

Lesson 8-8: Goals and Decision Making
Students brainstorm future wishes and ideas of what they want to become, and link the SEL skills to these desired outcomes. They work in small groups to consider how the consequences of sexual activity might affect the characters in various scenarios, both positively and negatively, and review protection and risk-reduction.

Lesson 8-9: Get Real! Capstone Project
In this culminating lesson, students create media projects to demonstrate the positive messages of Get Real. They are shown examples of public service announcements, pamphlets, educational posters and print ads, then are given class time to work on their projects. They conclude the lesson by reflecting on their own personal limits around sexual behaviors and how they can address challenges to those limits.
# Appendix E

Lesson Compliance with Corresponding National Sexuality Education Standards

## Grade 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>National Sexuality Education Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
*PD.8.AI.1* Identify medically accurate sources of information about puberty, adolescent development and sexuality.  
*PS.8.AI.1* Identify sources of support such as parents or other trusted adults that they can go to if they or someone they know is being bullied, harassed, abused or assaulted. |
| 6.2    | *HR.8.IC.1* Demonstrate communication skills that foster healthy relationships. |
| 6.3    | *HR.8.CC.1* Compare and contrast the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships.  
*HR.8.SM.1* Explain the criteria for evaluating the health of a relationship.  
*HR.8.CC.2* Describe the potential impacts of power differences such as age, status or position within relationships.  
*HR.8.CC.3* Analyze the similarities and differences between friendships and romantic relationships.  
*HR.8.CC.4* Describe a range of ways people express affection within various types of relationships.  
*HR.8.IC.2* Demonstrate effective ways to communicate personal boundaries and show respect for the boundaries of others.  
*PS.8.SM.2* Demonstrate ways they can respond when someone is being bullied or harassed.  
*PS.8.CC.3* Explain that no one has the right to touch anyone else in a sexual manner if they do not want to be touched. |
| 6.4    | *AP.8.CC.1* Describe the male and female sexual and reproductive systems including body parts and their functions.  
*PD.8.CC.1* Describe the physical, social, cognitive and emotional changes of adolescence. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>National Sexuality Education Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td><strong>AP.8.AI.1</strong> Identify accurate and credible sources of information about sexual health.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7.2 | **PD.8.INF.1** Analyze how friends, family, media, society and culture can influence self concept and body image.  
**PR.8.INF.1** Examine how alcohol and other substances, friends, family, media, society and culture influence decisions about engaging in sexual behaviors.  
**HR.8.INF.1** Analyze the ways in which friends, family, media, society and culture can influence relationships. |

| 7.3 | **ID.8.CC.1** Differentiate between gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation.  
**ID.8.AI.1** Access accurate information about gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation.  
**ID.8.IC.1** Communicate respectfully with and about people of all gender identities, gender expressions and sexual orientations.  
**ID.8.CC.2** Explain the range of gender roles.  
**PS.8.SM.1** Describe ways to treat others with dignity and respect.  
**PS.8.ADV.1** Advocate for safe environments that encourage dignified and respectful treatment of everyone. |

<p>| 7.4 | <strong>ID.8.ADV.1</strong> Develop a plan to promote dignity and respect for all people in the school community. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PS.8.CC.1</th>
<th>Describe situations and behaviors that constitute bullying, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, sexual assault, incest, rape and dating violence.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PS.8.SM.1</td>
<td>Describe ways to treat others with dignity and respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS.8.ADV.1</td>
<td>Advocate for safe environments that encourage dignified and respectful treatment of everyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS.8.CC.2</td>
<td>Discuss the impacts of bullying, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, sexual assault, incest, rape and dating violence and why they are wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS.8.SM.2</td>
<td>Demonstrate ways they can respond when someone is being bullied or harassed.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7.5</th>
<th>SH.8.CC.2 Compare and contrast behaviors, including abstinence, to determine the potential risk of STD/HIV transmission from each.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HR.8.SM.1 Explain the criteria for evaluating the health of a relationship.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HR.8.CC.4 Describe a range of ways people express affection within various types of relationships.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PS.8.CC.3 Explain that no one has the right to touch anyone else in a sexual manner if they do not want to be touched.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 7.6       | PR.8.CC.2 Define sexual abstinence as it relates to pregnancy prevention.  |
|           | PR.8.INF.1 Examine how alcohol and other substances, friends, family, media, society and culture influence decisions about engaging in sexual behaviors.  |
|           | PR.8.IC.1 Demonstrate the use of effective communication skills to support one’s decision to abstain from sexual behaviors.  |
|           | SH.8.INF.1 Analyze the impact of alcohol and other drugs on safer sexual decision-making and sexual behaviors.  |

<p>| 7.7       | PR.8.CC.3 Describe the signs, symptoms and potential impacts of STDs, including HIV.  |
|           | SH.8.CC.1 Define STDs, including HIV, and how they are and are not transmitted.  |
|           | SH.8.AI.1 Identify medically accurate information about STDs, including HIV.  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7.8</th>
<th><strong>PR.8.AI.1</strong> Identify medically-accurate resources about pregnancy prevention and reproductive health care.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PR.8.SM.1</strong> Describe the steps to using a condom correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PR.8.CC.4</strong> Define emergency contraception and its use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PR.8.AI.2</strong> Identify medically accurate information about emergency contraception.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>SH.8.GS.1</strong> Develop a plan to eliminate or reduce risk for STDs, including HIV.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.9</td>
<td><strong>PD.8.DM.1</strong> Demonstrate the use of a decision-making model and evaluate possible outcomes of decisions adolescents might make.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PR.8.IC.2</strong> Demonstrate the use of effective communication and negotiation skills about the use of contraception including abstinence and condoms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>HR.8.IC.1</strong> Demonstrate communication skills that foster healthy relationships.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>HR.8.IC.2</strong> Demonstrate effective ways to communicate personal boundaries and show respect for the boundaries of others.</td>
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</table>

**Grade 8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>National Sexuality Education Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td><strong>AP.8.AI.1</strong> Identify accurate and credible sources of information about sexual health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PD.8.AI.1</strong> Identify medically-accurate sources of information about puberty, adolescent development and sexuality.</td>
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<td><strong>PR.8.AI.1</strong> Identify medically-accurate resources about pregnancy prevention and reproductive health care.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PS.8.AI.1</strong> Identify sources of support such as parents or other trusted adults that they can go to if they or someone they know is being bullied, harassed, abused or assaulted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td><strong>HR.8.CC.1</strong> Compare and contrast the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>HR.8.SM.1</strong> Explain the criteria for evaluating the health of a relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>HR.8.CC.2</strong> Describe the potential impacts of power differences such as age, status or position within relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>HR.8.CC.3</strong> Analyze the similarities and differences between friendships and romantic relationships.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PS.8.CC.1</strong> Describe situations and behaviors that constitute bullying, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, sexual assault, incest, rape and dating violence.</td>
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<td><strong>PS.8.AI.1</strong> Identify sources of support such as parents or other trusted adults that they can go to if they or someone they know is being bullied, harassed, abused or assaulted.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>PS.8.CC.2</strong> Discuss the impacts of bullying, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, sexual assault, incest, rape and dating violence and why they are wrong.</td>
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<td><strong>PS.8.CC.3</strong> Explain that no one has the right to touch anyone else in a sexual manner if they do not want to be touched.</td>
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<td><strong>PS.8.CC.4</strong> Explain why a person who has been raped or sexually assaulted is not at fault.</td>
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<td>8.3</td>
<td><strong>PR.8.DM.1</strong> Apply a decision-making model to various sexual health decisions.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>SH.8.CC.2</strong> Compare and contrast behaviors, including abstinence, to determine the potential risk of STD/HIV transmission from each.</td>
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<td><strong>SH.8.AI.2</strong> Identify local STD and HIV testing and treatment resources.</td>
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<th><strong>PR.8.DM.1</strong> Apply a decision-making model to various sexual health decisions.</th>
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<td>Varies based on project.</td>
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Appendix F

Get Real Comprehensive Sex Education Sample Lesson Plan

Lesson 6.2

Communication and Refusal Skills

Connecting the Lessons

Lesson Goals
- Demonstrate use of skills for effective communication.
- Name reasons why assertive communication is important.
- Demonstrate refusal skills in role-play.

Preparation & Materials Checklist
- Be familiar with assertive, aggressive and passive communication styles.
- Practice examples of nonverbal communication.
- Pre-read assertive response scenarios and, if necessary, make adjustments for class population.
- Review student handouts:
  - Handout 6.2-2: Communication Skills
- Copy family letter and family activity.
- Have:
  - Assertive Communication scenario cards
  - Anonymous Questions Box
  - Slips of paper for anonymous questions

Terms to Use
- Active listener
- Nonverbal communication
- Assertive communication
- Passive communication
- Aggressive communication
- Refusal

SEL Skills Addressed
Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills

Logic Model Determinant(s)
Increase communication with parents and other caring adults.
Increase self-efficacy of SEL skills to delay and/or refuse sex.

Teacher Note
In discussing assertive communication, be sure to model examples of passive communication and aggressive communication to show assertive communication as a positive contrast. For students who have difficulty standing up for themselves, be sure to discuss the benefits of assertive communication and show the connection between clear communication and healthy relationships.
Process Family Activity

Process Family Activity from Lesson 6.1

Process Questions
1. Did you do the activity with your parent or other caring adult?
2. Name some feelings you had while doing this activity.
3. Name something you learned or discovered during this conversation.
4. What might you do differently as a result of this conversation with your parent or other caring adult?

Communication Skills

Introduce keys to effective communication; explain and practice active listening

Explain that today’s class will deal with communication. Ask students why clear communication is important and what can happen if people don’t communicate clearly.

Define effective communication for students as follows. Two things are important for active communication: (1) being an active listener, and (2) being able to get your message across.

Ask a student to share a story about a weekend activity. Demonstrate poor listening skills, then ask students what you did wrong as the listener.

After hearing their responses, ask students to turn to Handout 6.2-2 in the Student Workbook and review the Active Listening Checklist.

Process Questions
1. How can active listening lead to effective communication?
2. How can active listening reduce misunderstandings?
3. How does active listening connect to social awareness?

Explain nonverbal communication; practice skills for getting your message across

Introduce the Assertive Communication Checklist in the Communication Skills handout. Go through the steps in the handout. Demonstrate steps and give students time to practice each part.
Ask for examples of ways in which people communicate messages without speaking (choice of clothing, eye contact, body language, etc.). Have a few students come in front of the class to communicate a message quickly based on body language (bored in class, happy, sharing a secret, etc.). Other students should guess what the message is, then show their own version of the feelings from their seats.

**Process Questions**
1. In what ways can nonverbal communication get your message across?
2. In what ways can nonverbal communication reduce misunderstandings?
3. Why can it get confusing to understand someone’s meaning over social media or text? (Can’t see the person, can misunderstand tone.)

---

**Activity 6.2-3**
20 minutes

**Assertive Communication Scenarios**

Consider assertive communication scenarios

Ask students how they might feel if someone didn’t understand them (i.e., if their message did not get across).

Introduce assertive communication: the ability to express positive and negative ideas and feelings in an open, honest, and direct way. Also introduce passive and aggressive communication. (See the Teacher’s Guide for talking points.) Elicit examples of each of these styles from students.

Ask students why assertive communication is the most effective of these styles of communication. (It’s the only style that gets a person what they want/need, without ignoring/hurting the feelings of someone else.) Ask students to read the Assertive Communication Checklist in the Communication Skills handout.

**Practice assertive communication skills**

Pick a few of the assertive response scenarios. Play the role of the “problem person” and have students react to you. Remind students to use the Assertive Communication Checklist to communicate effectively.

Then give students the remaining scenarios and ask them to work through two or three with a partner.
Process Questions
1. How did it feel to practice assertive communication?
2. Ask students to raise their hands if they practiced saying “no” during any of the scenarios. What was challenging about saying “no”? What was challenging about hearing “no”?
3. Why is it important to respect a partner’s “no,” even if it’s difficult to hear?
4. Why are refusal skills an important part of assertive communication?

Emphasize for students that assertive communication is being taught as a skill because it is a healthy and responsible way for people to communicate. Sometimes assertive communication requires that a person may need to compromise or accept another person’s “no.” Respecting other people is an important part of social awareness.

Anonymous Questions Box
Review anonymous questions
Address student questions from the Anonymous Questions Box. Give students a new question prompt they can answer if they don’t have one about the class material, and remind students to place their anonymous questions in the box as they leave the classroom.

Family Activity
Explain family activity
Review the Family Activity for this lesson.

Get Real for Parents
Remind students to have their parent/caring adult use the access code to log in to the mobile website.
Assertive Communication

1. A friend has asked to borrow something you care about, but she never returned the last thing you loaned her.

2. A friend comes over to tell you something that is really important to him, but you are in the middle of studying for an important test.

3. The person you are dating wants you to stay a little longer, but if you don’t leave now, you’ll be late for something important.

4. Some friends of yours tell you they want to shoplift something, and they need your help to avoid getting caught.

5. A person you have met before starts spreading rumors about your best friend.

6. A friend asks you to go out, but you don’t like this person romantically.

7. Your teacher says you are missing a homework assignment that you know you turned in.

8. Your parents say they don’t like one of your friends, but that person is really important to you.
VITA

Jordyn Nicole Warren was born in Allentown, Pennsylvania. She received her bachelor’s degree from Appalachian State University in 2015, where she played Division I field hockey. She always had a passion for social issues and used this opportunity to look at ways the mass media can improve social issues for marginalized groups in society.