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University of Alaska Students' Disclosures of Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Assault Victimization

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In a recent Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Center (AJSAC) *Fact Sheet* issue (available at www.uaa.alaska.edu/ajsac) we published initial findings from the *University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey*, a research study funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. The *University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey* was designed to establish the prevalence of sexual misconduct and sexual assault committed against University of Alaska (UA) students both on and off campus.

The estimates of sexual misconduct and sexual assault published in the *Fact Sheet* were based on the self-reported experiences of 1,982 randomly selected undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), and the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) during spring semester 2016. Results showed that approximately 1 out of every 9 UA students experienced sexual misconduct, sexual assault, or both between January 2015 and spring semester 2016, either on or off campus.

Using data from the *University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey*, this article seeks to answer three basic questions: (1) How often did UA students who experienced sexual violence between January 2015 and spring semester 2016, either on or off campus, disclose their victimization to others? (2) For those UA students who did experience sexual violence victimization and who chose

to disclose their victimization to others, with whom did they share their experiences? (3) Did the likelihood of sexual violence disclosure vary significantly according to UA students' demographic characteristics (age, race/ethnicity, sex/gender)?

This article uses the data collected for the University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey to explore how often UA students who experienced sexual violence, either on or off campus, disclosed their victimizations to others. (Sexual violence is defined as sexual misconduct, sexual assault, or both.)

Survey Definitions of Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Assault

Sexual misconduct refers to unwanted, uninvited, or coerced touching of a sexual nature, or unwanted or uninvited sexual commentary. Survey respondents were asked, "Since January 2015, has someone attempted or succeeded in having unwanted, uninvited, or coerced touching of a sexual nature or unwanted/uninvited sexual commentary with you under any circumstances (on or off campus), or do you suspect someone did?"

Every survey respondent was provided the following examples of *sexual misconduct*: kissing without permission; forced kissing; touching of body or private parts in a sexual way without permission; grabbing, fondling, or rubbing up against a person in a sexual way (even if over clothing); taking a sexual experience further than wanted even if consent was given for minor sexual contact such as kissing or touching, without it leading to intercourse; and, lewd or blatant sexual comments that make a person feel uncomfortable, uneasy, or unsafe.

Sexual assault refers to nonconsensual or unwanted sexual contact with penetration, even if consent was given for minor sexual contact such as kissing or touching. Survey respondents were asked, "Since January

2015, has someone attempted or succeeded in having nonconsensual or unwanted sexual contact with you under any circumstances (on or off campus), or do you suspect someone did?"

Every survey respondent was provided the following examples of *sexual assault*: sexual penetration with a finger or object (someone putting their finger or an object in the vagina or anus); oral sex (someone's mouth or tongue making contact with genitals); anal sex (someone's penis being put into an anus); and sexual intercourse (someone's penis being put into a vagina).

Disclosure and Reporting of Sexual Violence Victimization

This article makes use of two terms to discuss sexual violence victims' efforts to make their victimizations known to others: *disclose* and *report*. These two terms are distinguished by the recipient of the information. *Disclosure* includes all the victims' discussions with others, but *reports* only includes the victims' discussions with officials such as university or law enforcement representatives.

Nondisclosure of Sexual Violence Victimization

Within the realm of criminal offenses, sexual violence is among the most *underreported*. Table 1 (page 11) presents findings from the 2014 National Crime Victimization Survey (an annual nationwide survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics), which asks crime victims if they reported their victimization to police. Overall, less than half (46.0%) of all violent crime incidents were reported to police. **Among the violent crimes examined, sexual assault/rape victimizations were the least likely to be**

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- A summary of the provisions of Senate Bill 91: Omnibus Criminal Law & Procedure; Corrections, which was signed into law in July (page 2).
- Findings from a survey of Anchorage adults on perceptions of youth marijuana use and youth non-medical use of prescription drugs (page 5).

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about youth marijuana abuse and its consequences. Parents and other adults expressed greater concern about youth prescription drug abuse and its consequences than about youth marijuana abuse.

CDC data show that from 2009 to 2015 in Alaska, youth alcohol use has declined substantially, youth marijuana use has declined slightly, and prescription drug use has remained stable. Nonetheless, very real risks of harm remain for those youth who abuse these substances. The concern of parents and other adults in Anchorage suggests that they may be particularly ready to be part of solutions designed to prevent youth substance abuse and its harmful consequences. The community readiness—of parents and other adults—is important because if they do not perceive youth

substance use and abuse as a problem, they are unlikely to promote or become involved in community programs or services designed to prevent or combat the problem. Substance use prevention programs and services should be multifaceted and include youth, adults, schools, and families. Adults in Anchorage could benefit from information on how to reduce youth access to substances including alcohol, marijuana, and prescription drugs. Parents and other adults who interact with youth could also benefit from resources to use when they sense that there is a problem. Parents especially could be helped by having information on effective techniques for monitoring youth and young adults, including communicating with youth about where they are when they are away from home, who they are with, and what they are

doing. Families with youth could gain from information on how to keep conversations going when youth begin to spend more time outside the home and with friends than at home with parents. It is especially important to provide parents with specific guidance on how to talk with youth about the “tough stuff,” including substance use and abuse and other risk behaviors such as dating violence, sexual behavior, driving while texting, or driving after drinking. Parents and other adults are highly influential in the decisions youth make and must be part of solutions to problems experienced by youth in Anchorage and the rest of Alaska.

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reported to police—only about one-third (33.6%) of these types of victimizations were reported. As seen in Table 1, the percentage of sexual assault/rape victimizations reported to law enforcement is much lower than for other violent crimes, as well as for most other property crimes with the exception of theft.

Reporting to police or other authorities occurs even less frequently when sexual violence victims are college/university students. A recent national study of sexual violence committed against U.S. college/university students led by Bonnie Fisher of the University of Cincinnati School of Criminal Justice found that only 2 percent of sexual violence victims reported their victimization to campus or other police, and just 4 percent reported their victimization to any college/university officials at all (including campus police).

While it is imperative for researchers, university officials, criminal justice professionals, and victim service providers to always respect a victim’s choice to not disclose their victimization to others, it is also important to recognize that nondisclosure may produce unintended negative consequences. Nondisclosure to police rules out the possibility that the person responsible for the sexual violence victimization—the offender—will be arrested or prosecuted. Nondisclosure of sexual violence victimization may prevent victims from learning about or receiving beneficial services and social supports. Nondisclosure means that victims cannot apply for or receive crime victim compensation funds to which they may be entitled. The choice to not disclose to

college/university officials also means that victims may not be able to access on-campus victim advocacy, medical, counseling, and other support services; receive referrals to additional off-campus resources; or seek administrative remedies or other forms of redress provided for in college/university policy. Finally, in the aggregate, high rates of nondisclosure may have the unintended effect of encouraging an overreliance on official sources of data (e.g., Clery Act and/or Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, see page 12) to (1) estimate the prevalence of sexual violence among students, and (2) to gauge the level of resources needed to develop robust prevention, intervention, and restoration programming.

UA Students’ Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Assault Victimization Disclosures

Within the framework of the *University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey*, UA students who indicated one or more sexual misconduct and/or sexual assault victimizations, either on or off campus, between January 2015 and spring semester 2016 were asked additional follow-up questions. Among the follow-up questions presented to UA student respondents was one asking if they *disclosed* their victimization experiences to anyone, and *to whom* they did (if they reported disclosure). Specifically, students were asked if they disclosed their sexual misconduct and/or sexual assault victimizations to: a roommate, a close friend (other than roommate), a romantic partner, a parent or guardian, a family member (other than parent or guardian), a counselor, a campus sexual assault advocate, a university faculty or staff member, residential hall staff, police (university/college or other), or some other individual or

Table 1. Percent of Victimization Reported to Police, by Type of Offense, 2014

Type of offense	Percent of victimizations reported to police
Violent crime	46.0 %
Sexual assault/rape	33.6
Robbery	60.9
Assault	44.6
Simple assault	40.0
Aggravated assault	58.4
Domestic violence	56.1
Intimate partner violence	57.9
Property crime	37.0 %
Burglary	60.0
Motor vehicle theft	83.3
Theft	29.0

Source: Reproduced from: J.L. Truman & L. Langton, (2015). "Criminal Victimization, 2014" (NCJ 248973), U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv14.pdf>

organization. This was a multiple-response question, so survey participants could select any that applied. Results to these questions are presented in Table 2 (page 12).

In Table 2 are shown the specific percentages of UA students who experienced *sexual misconduct*, either on- or off-campus, and who disclosed to a friend (not roommate), a romantic partner, a roommate, a parent/guardian, some other family member, a counselor, university faculty/staff, residence hall staff, a coworker, police, a campus sexual assault advocate, or other persons/organizations. Students were most likely to

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disclose sexual misconduct victimization to either a friend (45.3%) or a romantic partner (25.2%). It was much less likely for students who experienced sexual misconduct victimization to disclose to other intimates such as parents/guardians (6.4%), other family members (6.5%), or roommates (6.4%). With the exception of university faculty/staff (6.7%), students who experienced sexual misconduct were even less likely to disclose victimization through more formal help-seeking channels such as campus sexual assault advocates (0.5%), residence hall staff (0.5%), counselors (2.9%), or police (3.1%). An estimated 3.6 percent of UA students who experienced sexual misconduct victimization disclosed their experience to other persons/organizations. Finally, it was extremely rare that UA students who experienced sexual misconduct victimizations disclosed their experience to coworkers (0.2%).

Students who experienced *sexual misconduct* in the preceding year were more likely to disclose than students who experienced one or more *sexual assault* victimizations. Slightly more than two thirds (68.3%) of UA students who experienced one or more *sexual misconduct* victimizations (alone, or in combination with one or more sexual assaults) disclosed their experience to someone. In contrast, less than half (48.0%) of UA students who experienced one or more *sexual assault* victimizations (alone, or in combination with one or more incidents

Table 2. Percentage of Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Assault Victims that Disclosed to Others, by Individual/Organization Type

Individual/organization	% sexual misconduct victims that disclosed to:	% sexual assault victims that disclosed to:
Friend (not roommate)	45.3 %	28.0 %
Romantic partner	25.2	14.1
Roommate	6.4	11.2
Parent/guardian	6.4	9.5
Other family member	6.5	4.4
Counselor	2.9	3.3
Faculty/staff	6.7	0.4
Residence hall staff	0.5	1.1
Coworker	0.2	<0.1
Police	3.1	<0.1
Campus SA advocate	0.5	0.4
Other person/organization	3.6	<0.1
ANY disclosure	68.3 %	48.0 %

Note: Percentages do not total to 100.0% because survey participants could select multiple individuals/ organizations to whom they disclosed sexual misconduct and/or sexual assault experiences.

Source of data: Blumenstein & Myrskog, *University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey* (2016).

Clery Act

The Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act of 1990 was passed in large part due to the efforts of Connie and Howard Clery and applies to all colleges and universities that receive federal funding. The act was renamed the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act in 1998 in memory of their daughter, and is usually referred to as the Clery Act. Jeanne Clery was a 19-year old freshman student who was raped and murdered in her Lehigh University dorm room in 1986 by another Lehigh student.

The Clerys believed that better campus security policies and procedures and reporting of campus crime could have helped prevent the death of their daughter. They lobbied in Washington D.C. for mandatory provisions for colleges and universities nationwide to implement campus security measures, campus alert procedures, and to collect and report data on campus crime. The Clery Act took effect in 1991.

The Clery Act was later amended in 1992, 1998, and 2000, and most recently by the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) in 2008. Colleges and universities are required to have in place campus security policies and procedures, including crime reporting procedures, an emergency alert system, and processes for collecting and reporting of crime statistics by the institution annually to the U.S. Department of Education. These reports must be made

available to the public.

As outlined in the U.S. Department of Education *Handbook for Campus Safety and Security Reporting*, statistics for specific types of crimes occurring in specific locations must be collected and reported. The crimes falling under the Clery Act requirements for reporting by the institution include three general categories: (1) criminal offenses – based on UCR definitions (see “Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program,” below), (2) hate crimes, and (3) arrests and referrals for disciplinary action—weapons, drug and liquor law violations.

Crimes occurring at the following locations fall under the Clery Act requirements for reporting by the institution: “(1) on campus, (2) on public property within or immediately adjacent to the campus, and (3) in or on noncampus buildings or property that [the] institution owns or controls.”

For more detailed information on Clery Act requirements see the following:

The Handbook for Campus Safety and Security Reporting (2011), U.S. Department of Education (<http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/campus.html#handbook>).

U.S. Department of Education, Campus Security website (<http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/campus.html>).

Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program

The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program collects monthly information from more than 18,000 city, university and college, county, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement agencies that voluntarily report data on crimes reported to them. Data is collected, disseminated, and archived by the FBI.

The UCR records data for eight serious crimes (called Part I offenses) and more than twenty less serious offenses (called Part II offenses). Part I offenses include four violent crimes—murder

and nonnegligent manslaughter (homicide), forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault—and four property crimes—burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. In 2012, UCR data was reported by law enforcement agencies representing 98.1 percent of the total U.S. population.

Excerpted from *Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Center (AJSAC) Fact Sheets*.

of sexual misconduct) disclosed their experiences to anyone.

Like victims of sexual misconduct, UA students who experienced *sexual assault* victimization, either on or off campus, were most likely to disclose their experiences to either a friend (28.0%) or a romantic partner (14.1%). However, UA students who experienced sexual assault victimization were slightly more likely than victims of sexual misconduct to disclose to a roommate (11.2%) or a parent/guardian (9.5%). An estimated 4.4 percent of sexual assault victims disclosed to family members other than parents/guardians. Disclosure of sexual assault victimization to other individuals and organizations was exceedingly infrequent. An estimated 3.3 percent of UA students who were sexually assaulted disclosed to a counselor; an estimated 1.1 percent disclosed to residence hall staff; and only 0.4 percent disclosed to a campus sexual assault advocate. None of the students who participated in the survey, and who were sexually assaulted, reported any disclosures to police, coworkers, or other individuals/organizations. While we know that incidents of sexual assault are disclosed to police, coworkers, and other individuals/organizations, such disclosures occur so rarely that none of the UA students who participated in the survey reported any.

Demographic Factors Related to Disclosure

Research shows that sexual violence victim demographics influence the likelihood of sexual violence disclosure. In this article, we examine the impact three demographic characteristics have on UA students' disclosures of sexual violence victimization: student age, student race/ethnicity, and student sex/gender.

Age

Student age was measured using a single self-report item in the *University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey*. Respondents were asked, "What is your age?" (Note: The survey was limited to UA students age 18 years of age and older.) Table 3 presents the age distribution for the analysis sample. Less than half (44.8%) of survey participants were between the ages of 18 and 24; slightly less than one-third (31.5%) were between the ages of 25 and 34 years of age. The remainder of the sample—nearly 1 out of every 4 survey respondents—was at least 35 years old. The average age of UA students who participated in the *University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey* was 29.4 years old.

Our analysis revealed that UA student age was related to the likelihood of sexual

violence disclosure in a very specific way. Members of a single age group—UA students between the ages of 35 and 44—were least likely to disclose sexual violence victimization to others (see Figure 1). Fewer than 1 out of every 5 (18.4%) sexual violence victims in this age group disclosed to any individual or organization. UA students between the ages of 55 and 64 had the second lowest sexual violence disclosure rate (37.7%), followed by 18–24 year olds (65.8%), 45–54 year olds (71.7%), and finally 25–34 year olds (76.9%). Among all of the differences in disclosure rates that were observed, only three were statistically significant. UA students between the ages of 35 and 44 were significantly less likely to disclose sexual violence victimization than students between the ages of 18 and 24, students between the ages of 25 and 34, and students between the ages of 45 and 54.

Race/Ethnicity

The *University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey* measured respondent race/ethnicity with a set of multiple-response items that allowed respondents to record all of their racial/ethnic group memberships. Approximately 87 percent of survey participants reported one and only one racial/ethnic group membership. An additional

Table 3. Student Age Distribution of Respondents: University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey

Age category	Survey sample	
	Number	Percentage
18 to 24 years	888	44.8 %
25 to 34 years	624	31.5
35 to 44 years	220	11.1
45 to 54 years	136	6.9
55 to 64 years	73	3.7
65 years and older	28	1.4
Missing/unknown	13	0.6
Total	1,982	100.0 %
Average age	29.4	years

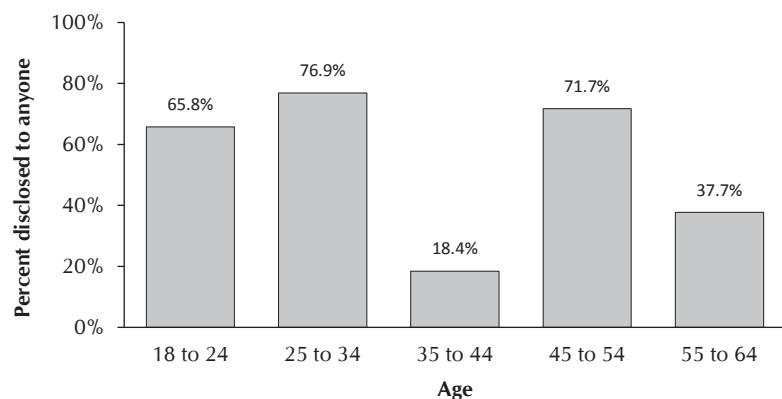
Source of data: Blumenstein & Myrskog, *University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey* (2016).

10.7 percent indicated membership in two or more racial/ethnic communities. Slightly more than 2 percent of respondents did not report a racial or ethnic identity (see Table 4, page 14).

In Table 4 is presented the racial/ethnic distribution of the *University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey* sample. Nearly 7 out of every 10 participants (69.2%) identi-

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Figure 1. Percent of University of Alaska Sexual Misconduct and/or Sexual Assault Student Victims who Disclosed Past-Year Victimization to Others, by Student Age^a



- a. Due to small sub-sample size, sexual misconduct and/or sexual assault disclosure rates could not be estimated for students ages 65 and over.
- b. Observed difference in rates of sexual misconduct and/or sexual assault victimization disclosure for students 35 to 44 years of age and students 55 to 64 years of age was not statistically significant ($F = 0.38$; $p = .540$). Observed difference in rates of sexual misconduct and/or sexual assault victimization disclosure for students 35 to 44 years of age and students 18 to 24 years of age was statistically significant ($F = 12.51$; $p = .000$). Observed difference in rates of sexual misconduct and/or sexual assault victimization disclosure for students 35 to 44 years of age and students 25 to 34 years of age was statistically significant ($F = 17.39$; $p = .000$). Observed difference in rates of sexual misconduct and/or sexual assault victimization disclosure for students 35 to 44 years of age and students 45 to 54 years of age was statistically significant ($F = 4.08$; $p = .045$).

Source of data: Blumenstein & Myrskog, *University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey* (2016).

UA students

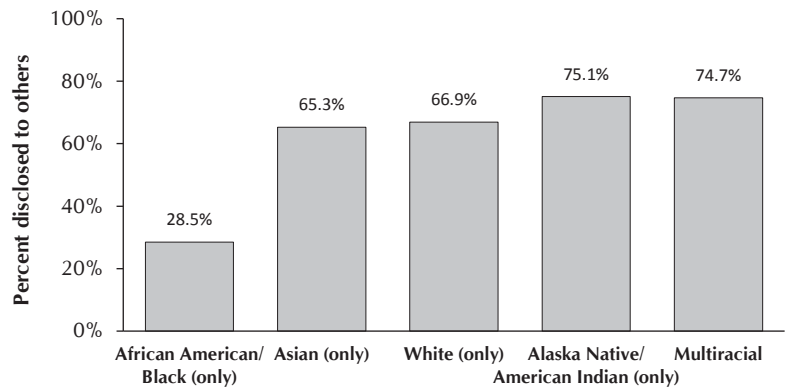
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fied as White (only). The second largest single-race/single-ethnicity group in the sample was Alaska Native/American Indian (only) (6.2%). Just under 5 percent of the sample identified as Asian (only); approximately 2 percent identified as either African American/Black (only) or Hispanic/Latino/a (only); and less than 1 percent identified as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (only). Two percent of the sample identified as members of some other racial or ethnic group (only). In excess of 10 percent of the sample reported membership in two or more racial and/or ethnic groups. Finally, 2.4 percent of the sample did not report a racial or ethnic identity.

Results of our race/ethnicity analysis are presented in Figure 2. Due to small sub-sample sizes, data are not presented for Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino/a students, or students who reported their racial/ethnic identities as Other.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the sexual violence victimization disclosure rate for one group—UA students who identified as African American/Black (only)—stood out from the other racial/ethnic groups. Just over a quarter of African American/Black students who experienced sexual violence disclosed their victimizations to others. In contrast, approximately two-thirds of Asian (only) and White (only) students who experienced sexual violence disclosed their victimizations to one or more parties. Even

Figure 2. Percent of University of Alaska Sexual Misconduct and/or Sexual Assault Student Victims Who Disclosed Past-Year Victimization to Others, by Student Race/Ethnicity^a



- a. Due to small sub-sample sizes, sexual misconduct and/or sexual assault disclosure rates could not be estimated for students whose self-reported racial/ethnic identities were: Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino/a, and Other race/ethnicity.
- b. Observed difference in rates of sexual misconduct and/or sexual assault victimization disclosure for African American/Black (only) and Asian (only) students was not statistically significant ($F = 2.43$; $p = .121$). Observed difference in rates of sexual misconduct and/or sexual assault victimization disclosure for African American/Black and White students was statistically significant ($F = 4.97$; $p = .027$). Observed difference in rates of sexual misconduct and/or sexual assault victimization disclosure for African American/Black and Alaska Native/American Indian students was statistically significant ($F = 4.36$; $p = .038$). Observed difference in rates of sexual misconduct and/or sexual assault victimization disclosure for African American/Black and multiracial students was statistically significant ($F = 5.60$; $p = .019$).

Source of data: Blumenstein & Myrstol, *University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey* (2016).

higher percentages—roughly three-quarters—of Alaska Native/American Indian (only) and multi-racial/multi-ethnic students who experienced sexual violence disclosed their victimizations to others. Three of the observed disclosure rate differences were statistically significant. African American/Black (only) students were significantly less likely to disclose sexual violence victimization than Alaska Native/American Indian (only) students, White (only) students, and multi-racial/ multi-ethnic students.

Sex/Gender

The *University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey* measured sex/gender with a single item. Respondents were asked, “What is your current gender identity?” Response categories included female, male, transgender female, transgender male, gender queer/ gender non-conforming, and other (specify). Because the sampling protocol and weighting procedures used for the survey relied upon UA sex/gender definitions (which

are limited to two categories—female and male), the analysis that follows is restricted to only those respondents who self-identified as female or male. (Note: As shown in Table 5, 96.7 percent of sample members identified as female or male; 1.4 percent of sample members identified as transgender female, transgender male, gender queer/gender non-conforming, or some other gender identity; and 1.9 percent of sample members did not report a gender identity.)

The results of our sex/gender analysis are presented in Figure 3. Overall, female victims of sexual violence were much more likely than male victims of sexual violence to disclose their victimization. An estimated

Table 4. Self-Reported Racial/Ethnic Group Identity of Respondents: University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey

Race/ethnicity	Number	Percentage
One race/ethnicity		
Alaska Native/American Indian (only)	122	6.2 %
Asian (only)	96	4.8
African American/Black (only)	38	1.9
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (only)	17	0.9
Hispanic/Latino/a (only)	37	1.9
White (only)	1,372	69.2
Other (only)	40	2.0
Two or more races/ethnicities		
Multi-racial/multi-ethnic	213	10.7 %
Missing/unknown	47	2.4
Total	1,982	100.0 %

Note: A comparison with the UA sampling frame is not presented because student race/ethnicity information was not included in the study’s sampling design, nor was it included in the UA sampling frame data.

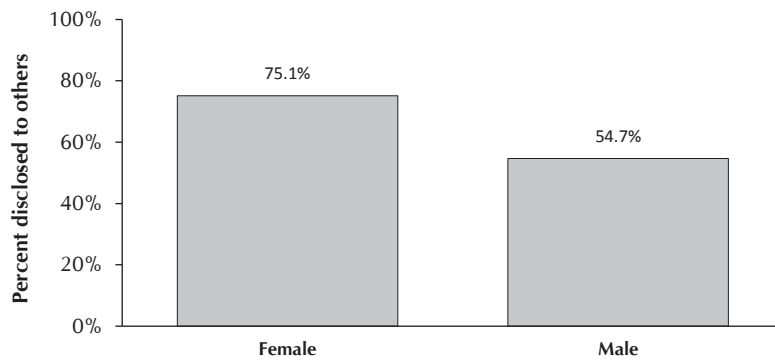
Source of data: Blumenstein & Myrstol, *University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey* (2016).

Table 5. Student Sex/Gender Distribution of Respondents: University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey

Sex/gender	Survey sample	
	Number	Percentage
Female	1,060	53.5 %
Male	857	43.2
All other	28	1.4
Missing/unknown	37	1.9
Total	1,982	100.0 %

Source of data: Blumenstein & Myrstol, *University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey* (2016).

Figure 3. Percent of University of Alaska Sexual Misconduct and/or Sexual Assault Student Victims Who Disclosed Past-Year Victimization to Others, by Student Sex/Gender



Note: Observed difference in rates of sexual misconduct and/or sexual assault victimization disclosure for female and male students was statistically significant ($F = 4.81$; $p = .029$).

Source of data: Blumenstein & Myrskog,
University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey (2016).

75.1 percent of female UA students who experienced one or more instances of sexual violence disclosed their victimization. In contrast, an estimated 54.7 percent of male UA students who experienced one or more instances of sexual violence disclosed their victimization. This observed difference was statistically significant.

Discussion

Using data from the *University of Alaska Campus Climate Survey*, this article sought to answer three basic questions: (1) How often did UA students who experienced sexual violence between January 2015 and spring semester 2016, either on or off campus, disclose their victimization to others? (2) For those UA students who did experience sexual violence victimization and who chose to disclose their victimization to others, with whom did they share their experiences? (3) Did the likelihood of sexual violence disclosure vary significantly according to UA students' demographic characteristics (age, race/ethnicity, sex/gender)?

Our analyses indicate that a majority (66.7%) of UA students who experience one or more sexual violence victimizations, either on or off campus, will disclose their victimization to *someone*. However, this finding comes with two important caveats. The first of these is that the likelihood of sexual violence victimization disclosure is heavily dependent on the *type of sexual violence victimization* that UA students experience. Students who experience *sexual misconduct* victimization are more likely to disclose to someone than students who experience *sexual assault* victimization. The second caveat is that regardless of the type of sexual violence victimization a UA student experiences, they are *highly*

unlikely to share what happened to them with university representatives or other authorities—particularly campus police, other law enforcement officials, or campus sexual assault advocates.

Both of these caveats are important for the development and advancement of university policies, procedures, and programs for addressing sexual violence victimization among students. With respect to the former, it is important for university representatives—administration, staff, faculty, and other employees—to understand that the most egregious and damaging forms of sexual violence are the least likely to be disclosed to anyone.

The low likelihood of a student disclosing victimization to a university representative or authority is particularly salient because it highlights the extent to which sexual violence committed against UA students (both on and off campus) is *underreported to authorities*. This gap between actual prevalence and estimated prevalence is commonly referred to as the “dark figure” of crime, and this gap exists irrespective of the source of data or particular measures used. However, the dark figure of crime tends to be more pronounced when estimates are derived from official data sources, and is especially pronounced when it comes to sexual violence. The low rates of sexual violence victimization disclosure presented in this article highlight the danger of relying on official data sources to establish the prevalence of sexual violence victimization among UA students, as well as to identify the specific programmatic needs of sexual violence victims. Put simply, reliance on official data sources will dramatically underestimate how often sexual misconduct and sexual assault is committed against UA students, and reliance on official

data sources will provide an incomplete and inaccurate understanding of the array of services and other administrative remedies student victims of sexual violence require.

In addition, from a programmatic development standpoint, it is critical to understand that when students disclose sexual victimization, they are overwhelmingly more likely to disclose to their peers (i.e., friends, roommates, and romantic partners) and *not* to campus authorities, counselors, or advocates. This finding is essential, in that it can inform the creation and development of sexual violence prevention and intervention education and services. More specifically, this finding indicates there is a critical need for peer-centered prevention and intervention techniques. Examples might include peer educators, hotlines run by peers, and even bystander intervention techniques that are specific to helping students understand how and what to do once a peer discloses a sexual victimization to them. If students are more comfortable disclosing to peers, providing options for peer assistance for victims could be an important tool in socio-emotional support services for students.

This study also shows that the demographic characteristics of UA student victims of sexual violence are associated with the likelihood of sexual violence victimization disclosure. Statistically significant relationships were discovered for each of the three demographic variables examined: age, race/ethnicity, and sex/gender. Importantly, however, the relationships are quite specific and nuanced.

For example, while student age is related to the likelihood of sexual violence victimization disclosure, the relationship is not linear. Rather than the likelihood of sexual violence victimization disclosure simply increasing or decreasing in a linear fashion with age, our findings revealed that UA students between the ages of 35 and 44 are significantly less likely to disclose sexual violence victimization than student victims in other age groups. Only 18.4 percent of UA students between the ages of 35 and 44 who experienced sexual violence disclosed to anyone. In contrast, 65.8 percent of students between the ages of 18 and 24, 76.9 percent of students between the ages of 25 and 34, 71.7 percent of students between the ages of 45 and 54, and 37.7 percent of students between the ages of 55 and 64 disclosed their sexual violence victimization to someone.

The relationship between student racial/ethnic identity and the likelihood of sexual violence victimization disclosure was similarly nuanced. Our analyses did not uncover a simple White–non-White contrast, nor was



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UA students

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there a discernable gradation in disclosure likelihood among differing racial/ethnic groups. Instead, we found that UA students who self-identified as African American/Black (only) were much less likely to disclose sexual violence victimization than students who self-identified as members of other racial/ethnic groups.

The most straightforward (and perhaps the least surprising) finding was for sex/gender. Our analysis clearly shows that female UA students who experienced sexual violence victimization are much more likely than their male counterparts to disclose their experiences to someone. Whereas three-quarters of female students disclosed to at least one individual or organization, only slightly more than half of male students did so.

In order to be maximally effective, university efforts to improve sexual violence reporting rates and access to victim resources need to be tailored to specific subgroups of students, most notably male students, African American/Black students, and older students. It is unsurprising that male students are significantly less likely to disclose given the social stigma attached to males and sexual victimization. Targeted efforts may help reduce the social stigma and encourage male students to seek resources and assistance. It is important that culturally sensitive and appropriate prevention education, intervention,

and victim services, especially for African American/Black students, are accessible. Lastly, it appears that older students are less likely to disclose sexual victimization. Targeted efforts to reach nontraditional students may include increasing students' awareness and knowledge of resources and support.

In conclusion, our findings show that it is highly unlikely that college/university students who experience sexual violence victimization will disclose to university representatives, or seek assistance through other formal help-seeking channels. This is fully consistent with research that has been conducted at other colleges and universities in the U.S. When they do share their sexual violence victimization experiences with others, college/university students are most likely to confide in friends, romantic partners, or other family members. In addition, the likelihood of disclosure is highly

influenced by age, race, and gender. Efforts to enhance victim services need to account for both of these findings.

Brad A. Myrston is a faculty member in the Justice Center and director of the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Center. Lindsey Blumenstein is a faculty member in the Justice Center.

New Staff

Elaine Main has joined the staff of the Justice Center as Academic Program Specialist. Most recently, Ms. Main worked for the University of Alaska Statewide Office of the Vice President for Finance and Administration in Fairbanks as Executive Assistant to the Chief Financial Officer.

New Look and Web Addresses for the Justice Center

The Justice Center, the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Center (AJSAC), and the Alaska Justice Information Center (AJIC), have new web addresses and a new look to their web pages as part of the new UAA website redesign.

Justice Center—www.uaa.alaska.edu/justice

Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Center—www.uaa.alaska.edu/ajsac

Alaska Justice Information Center—www.uaa.alaska.edu/ajic