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**THE ROLE AND AWARENESS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE INITIATIVES AT
ROWAN UNIVERSITY THROUGH UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS'
PERCEPTIONS**

by

Alyssa M. Paluch

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Arts in Higher Education

at
Rowan University
April 30, 2021

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother. It was always your hope that I would complete my education, go the extra mile, and be happy. It was tough at times, but through your heavenly guidance, I persevered. This one is for you, and I know you are proud of me. Thank you for watching over me always.

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I want to thank all of the individuals who contributed to the completion and success of this research study.

First and foremost, I want to thank my family. Your support does not go unnoticed. Thank you to my father, stepmother, brothers, grandparents, boyfriend, and other relatives for cheering me on along the way. Your undying love and advice have motivated me and encouraged me to “take one day at a time.”

To my professor and thesis chair, Dr. Raquel Wright-Mair: you are amazing. I seriously owe it all to you. You have stood by me, defended me, encouraged me and, most importantly, pushed me to build the best thesis ever. I am so grateful to have had you throughout graduate school. Thank you so very much.

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To the participants: I have said this countless times, but I thank you for your interest and participation in the research study. This would not have happened without your energy, time, and consideration. Thank you for allowing me to learn more about you and your voice on sexual violence on college campuses. Because of you, we are shining a light. We are promoting awareness.

Abstract

Alyssa M. Paluch

THE ROLE AND AWARENESS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE INITIATIVES AT ROWAN UNIVERSITY THROUGH UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

2020-2021

Raquel Wright-Mair, Ph.D.

Master of Arts in Higher Education

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to determine the overall role and awareness of Rowan University's sexual violence programs through the perceptions of undergraduate students. An online survey was distributed to all enrolled Rowan University undergraduate students to determine their perceptions of the sexual violence initiatives. After the survey was closed, semi-structured virtual interviews were conducted to further investigate those perceptions. Out of the 16,874 surveys distributed, 301 complete responses were recorded, which was about a 1.8% response rate. Out of the 43 participants who signed up after the survey to complete an interview, eight of them followed through, which was about an 18.6% response rate. The findings show that there is an overall lack of awareness for the sexual violence initiatives and for sexual violence itself on Rowan's campus. Nevertheless, data shows that there are also many benefits that the programs carry to help students and sexual violence victims/survivors, as well as helpful suggestions provided by the participants to improve them. It is hopeful that this research study promotes the urge for sexual violence prevention at Rowan University through the sexual violence initiatives and the perceptions from undergraduate students, as well as speak volumes of encouragement for other college campuses to do the same.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Sexual violence has been a rapidly growing topic of concern and a serious problem in the United States (Dills et al., 2016). Specifically, it has been a popular subject discussed within higher education (Clay et al., 2019; Cruz, 2020; Dills et al., 2016; Jessup-Anger et al., 2018; Moorman & Osborne, 2016; Napolitano, 2014; Paul & Gray, 2011; Wooten & Mitchell, 2016). It has been a pervasive issue on college campuses for over three to four decades (Koss et al., 1987; Jessup-Anger et al., 2018). Rates of sexual violence of college students are higher than the reported national rates throughout the country (Garcia et al., 2011). Sexual violence is extremely sensitive for whomever experiences it, and those experiences can result in physical, emotional, or mental health concerns (Perez & Hussey, 2014; Streng & Kamimura, 2015).

Most studies on sexual violence include men and women participants, highlighting women as the sub-group that is most often targeted (Dills et al., 2016; Dunn, 2013; Gross et al., 2006; Koss et al., 1987). However, it is important to note that sexual violence surpasses the binaries of cisgender men and cisgender women as it can also be experienced by those who identify as transgender or do not identify with a gender at all, involving the briefly mentioned and often silenced transgender community (Garvey et al., 2014; Potter et al., 2020; Wooten & Mitchell, 2016). In other words, sexual violence can affect anyone, and studies should be more appropriately and culturally designed to explore these nuances.

Whether or not students choose to report an incident of sexual violence, higher education institutions are required by law to investigate each complaint and provide support to the individuals involved (Oswalt et al., 2018). Students have the protection of Title IX, a federal law that defends citizens against sex discrimination (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015; Valentin, 1997). Colleges and universities have adapted and shaped their own policies, mainly inspired by the Clery Act in 1990 in addition to Title IX, to further help their students who have experienced sexual violence or who want to report an incident (Dunn, 2013; Holland & Cortina, 2017).

Statement of the Research Problem

There is a growing amount of research on sexual violence (Clay et al., 2019; Copenhaver & Grauerholz, 1991; Dunn, 2013; Frazier et al., 2009; Garcia et al., 2011). However, there is limited literature on the ways in which college students perceive and make meaning of sexual violence (Potter et al., 2020). This literature covers campus safety as a whole, not only being inclusive to sexual violence itself. These studies also focus on different variables, one of them being gender (Muscat, 2011). That is important to note, since much of the literature highlights the traumatic impacts on women specifically, who experience sexual violence at a disproportionately higher rate than men, (Dunn, 2013; Gross et al., 2006; Koss et al., 1987).

One particular qualitative study focused on students' perceptions of sexual violence resources on their college campus, using interviews (Garcia et al., 2011). The sample included only students who were identified as men or women, between ages 18 and 24, belonging in various demographic categories (Garcia et al., 2011). Results

showed that the students from five different college campuses valued their college's resources, reporting services, and initiatives (Garcia et al., 2011). However, they noted that more should be done regarding how administration handles sexual violence incidents (Garcia et al., 2011). The study concluded with recommendations on how to implement stronger prevention education about sexual violence for all students, as well as more awareness for the resources and reporting services (Garcia et al., 2011).

This qualitative study discussed the issues of sexual violence and the importance of on-campus resources through the lens of 78 college students (Garcia et al., 2011). This was a similar route taken to explore the current research problem I am presenting. While it was helpful that men and women participants were included in the research, this study did not specify whether the transgender community was represented. It is very important to include that demographic in the study, because regardless of their gender identity, they are still students. More research needs to be done in regards to sexual violence on college campuses, specifically focusing on successful initiatives and the perceptions of college students. Since the transgender community is an underrepresented and often marginalized population on college campuses (Beemyn, 2008; Garvey et al., 2014), it is necessary to capture their experiences and compare their perceptions to other demographics.

Significance of the Research Problem

This study examined the benefits of reporting services and resources through the lens of Rowan University undergraduate students of all demographics, particularly focusing on gender, and therefore determined the role and awareness of these programs. The research problem is significant, because sexual violence is still very common,

especially at higher education institutions (Clay et al., 2019; Cruz, 2020; Dills et al., 2016; Jessup-Anger et al., 2018; Moorman & Osborne, 2016; Napolitano, 2014; Paul & Gray, 2011; Wooten & Mitchell, 2016). In addition, students are being impacted tremendously by sexual violence in various ways (Oswalt et al., 2018). Students affected by sexual violence may be struggling with their mental health and wellbeing, or they may be having trouble with academics or their social life (Perez & Hussey, 2014; Streng & Kamimura, 2015). Worse situations may involve reporting an incident to the university and law enforcement and dealing with the traumatic effects of these processes after experiencing acts of sexual violence (Holland & Cortina, 2017; Streng & Kamimura, 2015).

Higher education stakeholders can also benefit from understanding the impact of sexual violence using the perceptions of undergraduate students from different demographics. Through the common literature and reports on sexual violence as a whole, as well as the data analysis on the perceptions of students, higher education administration could set up their future adaptations to work towards the awareness and prevention of sexual violence on their college campuses. Additionally, they could use this information to specifically strengthen or improve such initiatives if necessary.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to determine the overall role and awareness of Rowan University's sexual violence programs through the perceptions of undergraduate students. An online cross-sectional survey was used to (a) uncover the benefits and challenges of the reporting services and resources; and (b) potentially

provide recommendations to improve the reporting services and resources at Rowan to further help students and sexual violence victims in the future. The survey also collected basic information about student awareness and involvement with the sexual violence programs, and whether such programs were effective.

Virtual, semi-structured interviews were also conducted to further progress the research process. These kinds of interviews were designed to be well-suited for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of participants regarding sensitive issues, and it was more of an open-ended discussion rather than a strict “question-answer” format (Barriball & While, 1994). The interviews were voluntary to the students willing to participate in the survey. The purpose of the interviews was to further examine the effects of sexual violence resources on campus, and investigate the knowledge and awareness of them. The interviews also determined the perceptions of students in the transgender community about sexual violence and support services, compared to other groups of students, if applicable. Both the survey and the interview were used to collect the data for this study.

Operational Definitions

The following definitions were essential to the understanding of the study.

1. Sexual violence: The United States Department of Justice (2019) defines sexual violence as “any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient” (para. 1).

2. Perception: In my own words, perception is understood as a way of seeing or understanding something through your own mind; also can be referred to as one's "lens."

3. Title IX: The United States Department of Justice (2015) defines Title IX as "a comprehensive federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity" (para. 1). Rowan University (n.d.) also explains that Title IX "protects any and all students who feel they have been harassed or discriminated against due to their sex/gender" (para. 3).

4. Transgender: The National Center for Transgender Equality (2020) defines transgender and transgender people as "people whose gender identity is different from the gender they were thought to be at birth" (para. 2).

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of students about sexual violence and support services at Rowan University?
2. What are the benefits and challenges, if any, of the support systems for sexual violence at Rowan University?

Chapter II

Literature Review

Sexual violence on college campuses is a current issue that can be challenging to discuss. It can be difficult to converse as it can create deep discomfort and may be too personal a topic for some. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2019), sexual violence is any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of a recipient. A common misconception is that this issue only affects college women. However, sexual violence disrupts students of all genders (Oswalt et al., 2018), while statistics may show that women are the “common target” (Rape Abuse and Incest National Network, n.d.).

Sexual violence does not go unnoticed on a college campus, but many students choose not to report it to law enforcement or to the university, whether they are the victims or the bystanders. Administration offices and programs at different institutions offer support for the student body, but it can be hard for students to come forward and share their experiences. The fear of being embarrassed or humiliated can prevent students from reporting, as well as different burdens it may have on their mental health or wellbeing (Streng & Kamimura, 2015). It is important for students to report instances of sexual violence, but it is also vital to know why certain students are afraid of speaking up. Students are impacted by the sexual violence awareness challenges, support systems on college campuses, and the degree to which colleges are supporting their students.

Statistics of Sexual Violence on College Campuses

Sexual assault, harassment, and misconduct are pervasive problems on university and college campuses (Clay et al., 2019; Dills et al., 2016) and have been for over three decades (Jessup-Anger et al., 2018). Sexual violence and assault actions include rape, attempted rape, fondling or unwanted sexual touching, forcing a victim to perform sexual acts, and non-contact unwanted experiences like harassment (Dills et al., 2016; Rape Abuse and Incest National Network, n.d.). Rape continues to be the most under-reported crime on college campuses across America and nearly two thirds or 63% of all sexual assaults go unreported to police (Rowan Today, 2019).

There are several research studies and statistics that explain that women are the “common targets” of sexual violence on college campuses (Dills et al., 2016; Finley & Corty, 1993). Although this may be true, sexual violence affects people across all genders, and those statistics should not be ignored. The transgender community is also a group affected by sexual violence, yet it is underreported or never perceived as important (Perez & Hussey, 2014; Potter et al., 2020).

Age, Enrollment Year, and Gender

Although it can happen to anyone at any age, college-age adults are the demographic most likely to be victims of sexual violence (Wagner, 2017). Adults 18 to 24 years of age are at an elevated risk for sexual violence (Rape Abuse and Incest National Network, n.d.). Adults 18 to 24 years of age who are not enrolled in college experience sexual violence at higher rates than adults in similar age groups who are enrolled in college (Rape Abuse and Incest National Network, n.d.).

Undergraduate students have a higher risk for sexual violence than graduate students. More than 20% of women and 11% of men in undergraduate programs are victims of sexual assault annually (Castellanos & Huyler, 2018). Sexual violence can happen to any undergraduate student, whether they live on-campus or off-campus. According to Robert Kelchen (2018) and his analysis with National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) data, only 15.6% of all undergraduate students lived on-campus and that that percentage has been consistent since 2000.

Gender is one of the biggest categories under the umbrella of sexual violence statistics on college campuses. About 11% of all students (undergraduate and graduate) experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation (Rape Abuse and Incest National Network, n.d.). Among all undergraduate and graduate students, 8.8% of women and 2.2% of men experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation (Rape Abuse and Incest National Network, n.d.).

Other studies show that college women are still at an even higher risk for sexual violence (Finley & Corty, 1993; Streng & Kamimura, 2015; Wagner, 2017). Studies show that one in five women experience attempted or completed sexual assault/violence during their college years (Dills et al., 2016). Finley & Corty (1993) also mention that it is estimated that one-third of college women are victims of sexual violence by their senior year of college. College men are also victimized, but not as often as college women (Dills et al., 2016; Oswald et al., 2018). According to a 2007 study, it was discussed that more than 6% of men experienced attempted or completed sexual assault in college (Krebs et al., 2007).

Dills et al. (2016) further explain how a more recent study explains the prevalence rates of completed sexual assault/violence on nine college campuses (Krebs et al., 2016). For undergraduate women, the prevalence rate for completed sexual assault was 10.3%, and the prevalence rate for completed rape was 4.1% (Krebs et al., 2016). For undergraduate men, the prevalence rate for completed sexual assault was 3.1%, and the prevalence rate for completed rape was 0.8% (Krebs et al., 2016).

The Transgender Community

It was previously stated that sexual violence can affect and disrupt the lives of individuals from any gender. This is not limited to just cisgender men and cisgender women. However much of the existing research documents findings towards cisgender women and cisgender men, where there is a lacking statistic for transgender women and transgender men.

There have been discoveries through other research studies that indicate that students in the transgender community are targets of sexual violence. They are considered a vulnerable group when it comes to the topic of sexual assault (Paludi, 2016). These attacks often happen for many reasons, one being their gender identity (Paludi, 2016). The needs of the transgender student survivors must be addressed, and given the same sense of urgency as other genders (Perez & Hussey, 2014; Potter et al., 2020), because they are equally as important to the student community and to society as a whole.

Literature on the transgender community in higher education is minimal but gradually growing (Garvey et al., 2014). Information on sexual violence among transgender students is very uncommon (Perez & Hussey, 2014), yet their risk still runs

high. Many transgender survivors report that they have experienced sexual violence before the age of 25 (Perez & Hussey, 2014). This holds the possibility that they may have experienced it on or off a college campus (Perez & Hussey, 2014). Regardless of who the survivor is, any form of sexual violence can be detrimental to them and can lead to other serious problems (Potter et al., 2020).

Relationships

There are statistics that explain how a victim has been sexually assaulted by someone they knew or dated (Dills et al., 2016; Krebs et al., 2007; Oswald et al., 2018). This could range from an acquaintance, to a classmate, to a friend, or to a romantic partner. For example, 80% of all assaults involve acquaintances and 84% of the victims know their offenders (Tjaden et al., 2006). The dating aspect is important to research, especially at higher education institutions.

The study conducted by Oswald et al. (2018) reports that sexual violence in relationships affects college students the most. The researchers also note that there are more common issues in relationships affecting students than sexual violence (Oswald et al., 2018). This finding reminds counseling staff at higher education institutions to work with administrators on the need to focus on aspects of relationship violence in addition to sexual violence (Oswald et al., 2018). The researchers conclude that sexual violence is only a small portion of what happens on college campuses; relationship violence exists, too, and it is just as important as sexual violence (Oswald et al., 2018).

Reporting and Seeking Help

Oftentimes, reporting a sexual violence incident can be difficult to do, whether it is from the victim or the bystander. Reporting is perhaps one of the most important features policies or schools address (Holland & Cortina, 2017; Streng & Kamimura, 2015). However, despite the growth in policies or initiatives, sexual violence is still underreported (Armstrong et al., 2006). A student may choose to report to law enforcement, or they may choose to disclose the incident to a safe space or a trustworthy professional on campus.

College-age victims choose not to report to law enforcement for many reasons. Some victims believe the incident was a personal matter that they could handle themselves emotionally and physically (Rape Abuse and Incest National Network, n.d.). Some victims believe that they do not want to get the perpetrator in trouble in fear of being in more danger (Oswalt et al., 2018; Streng & Kamimura, 2015). Others think that the police would not help them in their situation. To elaborate, 20% of college women report to the police about their sexual violence experience, and only 32% of nonstudent women make a report as well (Rape Abuse and Incest National Network, n.d.). Two of the top fears for both college men and women in relation to reporting are the issues of confidentiality, and fear of not being believed (Sable et al., 2010).

A challenge that sexual violence victims usually face is seeking help during the reporting process. It is not forced upon the student to talk to a professional about the incident, but it is often encouraged by the university to seek help at any time the student feels comfortable enough to do so. This leads to the different policies, such as Title IX,

healthy campus initiatives, and programs college campuses should provide for the student body. University sexual violence policies are an important step in working to decrease sexual violence, and they play a crucial role in reporting (Streng & Kamimura, 2015). Increasing awareness increases reporting (McMahon, 2008; Streng & Kamimura, 2015).

Title IX

Since sexual violence is a very complex and multifaceted issue, the intervention strategies employed must address these complexities, allowing for them to be effective. To assist in this common struggle, there is an amendment under United States federal law called Title IX. This originates from the Education Amendments of 1972, which has become extremely significant legislation for colleges and universities (Streng & Kamimura, 2015). As defined by the U.S. Department of Justice (2015), Title IX is a federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in any federally funded education program or activity. Although not its original intent, Title IX now also protects victims of sexual violence (Cyphert, 2018; Holland & Cortina, 2017; Streng & Kamimura, 2015; U.S. Department of Justice, 2015; Valentin, 1997).

Title IX has many goals, but the two most important are prohibiting sex discrimination and protecting those who have been affected by sexual violence (Streng & Kamimura, 2015). Title IX requires campuses to stop discriminatory action, to remedy its effects, and to prevent its recurrence (Landreman & Williamsen, 2018). There has been a constant and urgent need for Title IX officers and coordinators to take responsibility and supervise sexual violence prevention, investigation, and decision/ruling processes (Landreman & Williamsen, 2018). Because of Title IX, colleges and universities must

respond promptly to sexual violence, as well as provide students with access to support systems and healthy campus initiatives (Holland & Cortina, 2017; Streng & Kamimura, 2015).

There have been major reports produced by the United States Government about the sexual violence prevalence on college campuses. These reports were intended to protect students further from any discrimination on the basis of sex, assisting and supporting Title IX. Colleges and universities adapted these two reports: the Dear Colleague Letter (2011) and the Not Alone report (2014).

“Dear Colleague” Letter (2011) and “Not Alone” Report (2014)

In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE), along with the assistance of former President Barack Obama and former Vice President Joe Biden, issued a “Dear Colleague” letter, intended to serve as a reminder of the Title IX regulations and combat underreporting and mishandling sexual assault cases on college campuses (Cyphert, 2018; Oswald et al., 2018). It is a reiteration of the amendment, explaining that sexual violence and assault are, in fact, forms of sex discrimination (Cyphert, 2018; Harton, 2019). Because of the importance of this issue being overlooked or ignored, this letter helps define the Title IX policies in a different light. Colleges and universities that receive federal funding are to enact a number of policies in order to maintain Title IX compliance for all students (Ullman, 2019).

In 2014, the White House Task Force published the “Not Alone” Report (White House Task Force, 2014). This report holds colleges and universities responsible for needing to act to prevent sexual violence of their students (Streng & Kamimura, 2015;

White House Task Force, 2014). This means that these schools need to take charge in these situations. This report also encourages these institutions to implement stronger policies and initiatives for when students are in danger (Streng & Kamimura, 2015). This report sheds a light on the Title IX policies many higher education institutions have adapted.

Title IX Policies at Rowan University

Rowan University, located in Glassboro, New Jersey, has its own Title IX regulations. New federal Title IX regulations mandated updates to institutional Title IX policies in 2020. An important objective that has not changed, however, is that Title IX at Rowan University applies to all students, staff, and faculty from all forms of sex discrimination and sexual violence, and it is not discriminatory towards anyone. As a recipient of federal financial assistance, Rowan University has authority over complaints declaring sex discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence (Rowan University, n.d.). This means that if they receive a report, administration must take care of it in a timely and orderly manner.

When the Title IX policies and regulations are violated against a student, it is the university's responsibility to take further action. This includes responding to the incident promptly and preventing further violations. If the student decides not to report the incident to law enforcement, the university will still stick to appropriate measures and investigate what exactly occurred (Rowan University, n.d.). The university has the right to take whatever procedures deemed appropriate in response to an allegation of sexual

violence in order to best protect students and the personal safety of the campus community (Rowan University, n.d.).

Rowan University also explains the importance of confidentiality and how it is permitted by law for them to maintain that. The complainant can choose to make their report confidential or private (Office of Student Equity & Compliance, n.d.). These two terms sound similar, but it is crucial to note that they mean two different things. Confidential means that no one else is allowed to know about the incident, and private means that it is acceptable for other professionals to know about the incident (Office of Student Equity & Compliance, n.d.). Additionally, Rowan University offers detailed information about the next steps in how to further resolve the problem. This includes going to counseling services or seeking medical attention, if necessary (Office of Student Equity & Compliance, n.d.).

Sexual Violence Prevention Programs/Initiatives on College Campuses

To address the widespread problem of sexual violence, many higher education institutions have created and implemented different prevention and awareness programs (McMahon et al., 2014). One popular strategy is the bystander intervention initiative. The bystander technique has been recognized as holding promise for addressing sexual violence (McMahon et al., 2014). This is because all students have a responsibility to intervene in situations that may lead to sexual violence, and all students can respond during or after the event occurs (Banyard et al., 2004). Every student plays an important role in the student body, and supporting a victim could potentially prevent future occurrences of sexual violence from happening again.

Another popular prevention strategy is the debunking of rape myths. Rape myths are a rising common belief in society, especially among college students. Rape myths are defined as false beliefs about rape shaped by sexism and other prejudices to try and shift blame from the perpetrator to the victim (Burt, 1980; Hinck & Thomas, 1999; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). An example of a rape myth would be blaming the victim for dressing up “too much,” therefore sexually attracting the perpetrator (Burt, 1980; Hinck & Thomas, 1999). Reducing rape myths is important, because they represent challenging attitudes and they are cited as an explanatory predictor in the actual perpetration of sexual violence (Hinck & Thomas, 1999). This reduction can contribute to helping prevent sexual violence overall.

Many colleges and universities implement different prevention programs or activities for students to physically participate in. These activities encourage students to spread awareness of one of the most prevalent issues on a college campus. An example of a sexual violence awareness event is “Take Back the Night.” This is an organization that has been around since the 1960s around the world, and officially started in the United States in 1973 (Take Back the Night, 2019). This program seeks to end all types of sexual violence, including domestic and dating violence (Take Back the Night, 2019). These events have been reported in over 30 countries, in over 800 communities, including colleges and universities (Take Back the Night, 2019). While many institutions implement this event creatively in their own styles, Rowan University has its own version of “Take Back the Night.”

“Take Back the Night” – Rowan University

Every April, Rowan University’s Sexual Violence Protection Task Force and Healthy Campus Initiatives host an event called “Take Back the Night.” The purpose of this program is to promote sexual violence awareness for all students and to encourage survivors to speak up (Rowan Today, 2019). The event takes place at the Chamberlain Student Center in the heart of campus, and it is a two-hour long program. It features an “open mic” platform where individuals affected by sexual violence may speak publicly about assault (Rowan Today, 2019).

Besides the “open mic” platform, there are a dozen student organizations at the event that have their own informational tables. These student leaders support “Take Back the Night” and encourage student guests to interact with their organizations. Additionally, students are encouraged to speak to counselors present at the event if they need someone to speak to about their experiences or concerns with sexual violence (Rowan Today, 2019).

The night concludes with a campus-wide walk to show strength in the face of unknown would-be assailants everywhere (Rowan Today, 2019). According to Healthy Campus Initiatives, having an event like this on campus helps students feel safe to know they are not alone in the fight (Rowan Today, 2019). Also, “Take Back the Night” reminds students that there are safe spaces and resources they can use if they ever want to talk or report (Rowan Today, 2019). This event may generate certain feelings and experiences for some students, and that is why mental health and wellbeing are important for this research.

Mental Health and Wellbeing of Students

Another consistent concern within college students is mental health and wellbeing. College itself is a giant umbrella, with other factors residing under that umbrella. With that being said, there are many things that could impact a student's mental health and overall wellbeing, including academics, finances, and anxiety. However, although it does not happen to every single student, sexual violence can significantly impact a student's mental health and wellbeing in unbelievable ways (Perez & Hussey, 2014; Streng & Kamimura, 2015).

Physical and Emotional Responses

Any student survivor can feel the negative effects of sexual violence, and every student survivor handles it differently in their own way. The effects of sexual violence can jeopardize the mental, emotional, and physical welfare of students (Streng & Kamimura, 2015). Survivors may or may not be very emotional and can exhibit a range of emotional responses to sexual violence, such as calmness, hysteria, laughter, anger, shock, depression, shame, guilt, anxiety, fear, denial, embarrassment, or suicidal thoughts (Perez & Hussey, 2014; Rowan University Sexual Violence Prevention Program, n.d.). Physical responses may include panic attacks, difficulty concentrating, difficulty trusting others, change in appetite, sleep problems, weight loss or gain, headaches, stomachaches or other pains, increased use of alcohol and/or drugs, and loss of interest in normal activities (Perez & Hussey, 2014; Rowan University Sexual Violence Prevention Program, n.d.).

Reporting Barriers and Challenges

The authors in a study asked college students to rate the importance of a list of challenges to reporting sexual violence among college men and women. Based on their findings, barriers prevalent 30 years ago are still just as prevalent today, if not more (Sable et al., 2010). The top three answers among these students are (1) feeling ashamed or embarrassed and not wanting any family or friends to know; (2) concerns about confidentiality; and (3) fear of not being believed (Perez & Hussey, 2014; Sable et al., 2010). These findings have led to useful recommendations and benefits to reporting sexual violence. Benefits include heightening awareness for a prevention of the crime, and an increased opportunity to receive the potential medical and psychological aid to assist in recovering from such an experience (Sable et al., 2010). Other findings share that there needs to be more sensitivity towards men since women are most commonly victims in sexual violence (Sable et al., 2010).

When a student notices the emotional or physical responses, they may feel stuck and not know how to handle them by themselves. College campuses have a specific job to attend to if a victim of sexual violence reports their incident (Brenner, 2013). It is their mission to make sure that all students are safe and aware of the resources and help on campus. Again, although it is the student's choice to report, a university must offer that help to them (Brenner, 2013; Streng & Kamimura, 2015). There are ways to bring attention to this issue and intervene appropriately (Brenner, 2013; Rowan University Sexual Violence Prevention Program, n.d.).

Sexual Violence and Campus Culture

Sexual violence continues to be a steady concern on college campuses (Garcia et al., 2011; Koss et al., 1987; Jessup-Anger et al., 2018). Based on statistics, literature, and the unique growth and development of our society throughout the years, students tend to build their own campus culture on issues and topics in higher education through certain influences that may impact critical thinking and decision-making (Baird, 1988; Kuh, 1990; Tsui, 2000; Weidman, 1989). Campus culture influences the socialization of students, meaning that often times students perception of their institution's norms, including peer norms is shaped by their experiences on campus (The New York Times, 2004). Many effective organizations describe culture as a major contributor to shaping ideas and experiences (Tichy, 1983; Tsui, 2000). In college, the institutional environment affects many parts of the college experience, including student learning processes. (Baird, 1988; Kuh, 1990; Weidman, 1989).

Peer norms tend to be more harmful than an institution's norms. Institutional norms can be described as what the institution expects for their students in terms of code of conduct. When the values of an institution differ from the norms established by students within the community, there can be an adverse impact on institutional climate and culture. (Culture of Respect, 2018). However, oftentimes the perceptions of sexual violence tend to develop by negative campus cultures created by the students themselves on campus (Brenner, 2013). It depends on what students think about the issue, as well as what their circles of friends think as well. Peer norms relate to peer pressure; it can be easy to follow instead of lead. This analogy can further connect to bystander intervention and reporting sexual violence incidents (McMahon, 2015).

Instead of letting this negative campus culture exist, some higher education institutions are pulling their best efforts together in producing a positive campus culture for sexual violence prevention (Brenner, 2013; Culture of Respect, 2018; McMahon, 2015), although this process does not happen overnight. These efforts may include the healthy campus resources offered to students, as well as training courses and other helpful initiatives to further educate them. No matter the amount of time it takes, there needs to be a culture of respect created in order to eventually end campus sexual violence (Culture of Respect, 2018).

Summary of Literature Review

Sexual violence is an escalating issue in the United States (Dills et al., 2016), and especially on college campuses (Koss et al., 1987; Jessup-Anger et al., 2018). A sensitive topic such as this one has shocking statistics for college students that should not be overlooked. The statistics constantly prove that sexual violence can affect every student on a college campus, regardless of their unique demographics. Many other factors build and influence the structure of the problem itself, such as age, enrollment year, gender, and relationships.

It is crucial to learn about Title IX and its policies impacting campus life. By federal law, colleges and universities must implement and enforce Title IX (Cyphert, 2018; Holland & Cortina, 2017). Discrimination of any kind is prohibited, and every student is protected by this law (Cyphert, 2018). For Rowan University, where this study is based, they must investigate all allegations and take any action necessary to help the

students in the best and appropriate ways possible (Office of Student Equity & Compliance, n.d.).

Although it is unfortunate that this is a recurring problem on college campuses, it is important to note the significance of the role that college administration plays in it (Clay et al., 2019). When the university does not comply with Title IX regulations and when the university does not attend to the student's plea for help through traumatic experiences like sexual violence, students often do not feel supported or valued. This is when other members of the student body feel like something should be done for the victims. This is where the sexual violence initiatives come in. There are the numerous higher education institutions that do put their students first and offer their utmost support through their own resources and organizations (Clay et al., 2019; Streng & Kamimura, 2015), even though the negative campus culture for sexual violence continues to exist through multiple factors. These factors are further explained in this research study.

Chapter III

Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine the undergraduate students' perceptions towards the reporting services and resources at Rowan University regarding sexual violence. Sexual assault, harassment, and misconduct are pervasive problems on university and college campuses (Clay et al., 2019). They have been problems for over three decades as well (Jessup-Anger et al., 2018).

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of students about sexual violence and support services at Rowan University?
2. What are the benefits and challenges, if any, of the support systems for sexual violence at Rowan University?

Research Design

This study utilized a convergent mixed methods approach. It combined both quantitative and qualitative methods of research to integrate evidence in a more meaningful manner than either model could achieve alone (Creswell & Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Patterson, 2013). Mixed methods research is a dynamic opportunity for expanding the scope and improving the analytic power of research studies

(Sandelowski, 2000). Quantitative research generally involves the collection of data from surveys or questionnaires, while qualitative research typically includes data from focus groups or interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2013; Gordon et al., 2008; McMillan, 2015). Mixed methods studies combine these two distinct approaches and provide more answers, conclusions, and recommendations for future potential research studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). A mixed methods research design is a social inquiry that is viewed as a way of thinking, actively inviting us to participate in seeing and hearing multiple things, while making sense of the world (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Greene, 2007; Greene, 2008).

Based on the literature written about mixed methods research and from the components of this research study, it was the most suitable to build it on a mixed methods research design. A typical research design is defined as the general structures, plan, and procedures of a study to collect data (McMillan, 2015), otherwise known as a procedure inquiry (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). The most appropriate mixed method research designed to describe this research study was a convergent design. A convergent mixed method research design simultaneously implements both the quantitative and qualitative methods, collecting and analyzing the data all at once (McMillan, 2015). This design also involves combining the two sets of data and pulling it together into one single interpretation, in the order that both sets of data can be compared (Fetters et al., 2013; McMillan, 2015). While it is mixed method, this study's research design is also non-experimental and comparative, which is still widely popular among research (McMillan, 2015). A comparative study takes a dependent variable and an independent variable, and it examines the relationship between the two (McMillan, 2015).

For this study, I applied the convergent mixed methods research design that was non-experimental and comparative, because it best fit the research questions and purpose of the study. Mixed methods studies generally take more time and dedication to analyze and complete (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; McKim, 2016). However, for this particular research study, it was the most appropriate choice in collecting data about sexual violence and students' perceptions of their institution's sexual violence programs. Plus, certain research questions are best addressed using qualitative analysis over quantitative methods, and vice versa (Morgan, 2007; Patterson, 2013). In sum, quantitative and qualitative research can help future practice and future studies to better understand sexual violence, its impacts and effects, and the most useful ways for higher education institutions to respond (Culture of Respect, 2018).

Context of the Study

The study was conducted at Rowan University, a public four-year research university located in Glassboro, New Jersey. Today, the undergraduate and graduate student body totals about 19,600 students (Rowan University, 2019). In particular to this research study, there are about 17,000 undergraduate students (Rowan University, 2019). Currently, Rowan offers various academic programs to its students, including 85 bachelor's programs and 46 master's programs. The student-faculty ratio is 17:1 (Rowan University, 2019).

Rowan University's undergraduate student demographics include race/ethnicity, age, and gender. As of the 2019-2020 school year, 65.8% of undergraduate students are White; 10.1% are Black/African American; 10.0% are Hispanic/Latinx; and 4.5% are

identified as Asian (College Factual, 2020). Age exists with a wide range, with 31.1% of students aged 20-21; 23.9% of students aged 22-24; and 22.6% of students aged 18-19 (College Factual, 2020).

An important contribution to Rowan's demographics and to this particular study was gender. As of the 2019-2020 academic year, 54.2% of undergraduate students are women, and 45.8% are men (College Factual, 2020). This information was useful to the study in regards to the comparative analysis of traditional undergraduate student perceptions. However, it was difficult to find any valuable statistics regarding the transgender population at Rowan. This statistic would have been helpful while creating my sample for data collection, and would rather be labeled as a limitation for the study entirely.

Safety is a priority for all college campuses and all college students attending those campuses (Jennings et al., 2007). As of the last academic year, Rowan University was one of the Top 100 Safest Campuses for the second consecutive time by the National Council for Home Safety and Security (Rowan University, 2019). To keep up with this proud reputation, Rowan offers many different resources to their students, especially in the case of sexual violence. This includes reporting services for sexual assault and sexual violence, a Title IX office, and other professionals on and off campus to help discuss certain incidents with students (Office of Student Equity & Compliance, n.d.).

Population and Sample Selection

The population for this study was all enrolled undergraduate students who lived on or off Rowan University's main campus in Glassboro, New Jersey, which was a total

of 16,874 students. The list of all undergraduate students was provided before the sampling techniques were implied. According to Rowan University's Fast Facts for the 2019-2020 academic year (2019), 31.35% of the student body was from under-represented groups. It was important to include students of all races, ethnicities, and other demographics, so this was considered for the sample. This also served as motivation while I created the profile/demographic questions for the survey.

One particular study on relationship and sexual violence on college campuses removed transgender students from their sample, because the researchers felt like their experiences with sexual violence were more negative than non-transgender students (Oswalt et al., 2018). However, I believed that it was crucial to include a selection of those students in my sample, because they are one of the most underserved groups on college campuses (Beemyn, 2008). Plus, they are human beings and their opinions count. It was extremely critical to let their voices be heard in this study.

The survey population was divided into three subgroups based on gender: cisgender men (95), cisgender women (177), and transgender men and women (8). This was the final sample of the study. This categorization method was the main focus from the stratified sampling technique. This could be found in the survey as an explanation for being organized as such. Because of the underrepresentation of transgender students, this sampling technique was the best fit for the study. Participants were then selected from each subgroup for the interview, using purposive sampling procedures, rather than being selected from the total population (McMillan, 2015).

Data Collection

An online cross-sectional survey was created and used to (a) uncover the benefits and challenges of the reporting services and resources; and (b) provide recommendations to improve the reporting services and resources at Rowan to further help students and sexual violence victims in the future. The survey also collected basic information about student awareness, involvement, and familiarity with the sexual violence programs, and whether such programs were effective. The survey was designed by me using a cross-sectional reference as a guide to build the survey, collecting information from different groups from the sample (McMillan, 2015).

A survey instrument was created for the quantitative part of the study. This was the most appropriate tool to use for a research study dedicated to sexual violence on college campuses, because it was the most organized form of collecting various answers and opinions from participants. This survey instrument was created through a software called Qualtrics, which is Rowan University's official survey tool. Qualtrics serves as a data collection tool for businesses and schools to determine a variety of insights from students and employees all in one place (Qualtrics, 2020). The survey was distributed through Qualtrics; and data was organized and analyzed within the software itself, making data collection as simple as possible (Qualtrics, 2020).

Virtual, semi-structured Zoom interviews were also conducted to further progress the research process. These interviews were voluntary to the students willing to participate in the survey. Participants had the option to provide their email address at the end of the survey. From there, I was able to determine the interview participants using

purposive sampling procedures. The purpose of the interview was to further examine the perceptions of the undergraduate students about the sexual violence resources on campus and investigate the knowledge and awareness of them. Both the surveys and the interviews also determined the perceptions of students in the transgender community about sexual violence and support services, compared to other groups of students, if applicable.

A semi-structured virtual Zoom interview was created for the qualitative part of the study. Again, because of the relativeness and significance of the research topic, an interview instrument was the most effective strategy in collecting in-depth understanding and important information for the study. The interview questions (Appendix C) were created by myself, based on the survey questions that I created with the influence from the structures mentioned in McMillan's book on fundamentals in educational research (2015).

The results from this study may have provided foundation for future practice and research, with different population samples and study designs. The results may have varied; they may have served similar purposes, or they may have been completely different. Regardless, all results helped us better understand the sensitive concern of sexual violence on college campuses, especially for this research topic at Rowan University in particular. For this study, there were minimal to no risks, since participants were asked questions that did not involve giving out any personal and identifiable information. The demographic questions were not hostile and were not required an answer from the participants to fully complete the survey. Approximately five minutes was the average time of completing the survey, and approximately 30 minutes was the

average time of completing the interview, depending on how much information participants decided to share. There was no cost to participate in this research study. Also, before both the survey and the interview, consent procedures for participants were given and followed.

After receiving permission from Rowan University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in January 2021, I distributed the surveys first via email to my sample on Thursday, February 11, 2021. The survey began with an introduction about the survey itself and a brief consent explanation about voluntary participation. As a researcher, I knew, because of the nature of the topic being studied, that the data would potentially not be accurate; and perhaps some of the survey responses would be limited or biased, and/or that certain students would not want to participate at all.

Identification of students was not recorded, meaning their names were not on the survey or interview, and the survey was structured a certain way to make sure that all responses were anonymous. I provided the explanation of the importance of confidentiality. I recognized that the students' answers to the interviews would be confidential and would not be distributed to any persons outside of this research study. The survey collected the participants' demographics, including their race/ethnicity, gender, age, and enrollment year.

Throughout the window between sending out the surveys, collecting them, and conducting the interviews, I kept the survey open to the students to give them some time to complete. I had most surveys and interviews completed and recorded by the beginning

of March 2021, estimating data collection time to be three weeks. I started analyzing the data after data collection was terminated.

Data Analysis

Once data collection was complete, the data analysis process began. This was the longest stretch of the research study, because it was crucial not to miss any important perceptions that could potentially benefit and support the research study. The data was analyzed using Qualtrics. This software was purposeful in organizing statistics and other datasets (Qualtrics, 2020). The thematic analysis approach was also applied to the data. After using the two data analysis approaches, a certain mixed method integrative strategy was applied to conclude the data analysis and move on to the summarizing phase of the research process.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed using an online survey platform, Qualtrics. Since this study's research design was mixed method, non-experimental, and comparative, there were many factors that were being measured. Descriptive data for the participants were available and carefully reviewed, and descriptive statistics were run on the survey data, which is common for quantitative research (McMillan, 2015). These indicators were found in Qualtrics, as it automatically generated data analysis and reports used to easily navigate through research studies (Qualtrics, 2020). These important numbers and data were used to examine and support the research questions for the study.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The thematic analysis approach was used for analyzing the qualitative portion of the data. This commonly-used, flexible, and accessible qualitative method was the most effective way in finding themes through coding, because I used semi-structured interviews to gather more information for the study. The interviews were transcribed, so I was able to go back and analyze every interview. The thematic analysis approach is typically used for sets of text, such as interview transcriptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These transcriptions often hold themes that the researcher needs for connections, as a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions and represents some level of patterned response (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The end result of a thematic analysis should highlight the most outstanding meanings that currently exist in the dataset (Joffe, 2012).

There was a six-step process to the thematic analysis approach for this study. The first step was familiarizing with the data. This step involved getting to know the data, transcribing interviews, and writing down new numbers and ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The second step was generating the initial codes. This contained coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The third step was searching for themes, which was comprised of gathering all data relevant to each potential theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The fourth step was reviewing themes, which meant having the themes and refining them, if needed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The fifth step was defining and naming themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The sixth and final step was producing the report, which entailed relating the analysis to the research questions and writing a narrative on the research study findings (Braun &

Clarke, 2006). These themes were further explained in a detailed narrative or in a thematic map.

Mixed Methods Integrative Strategy

In simplest terms, there was a mixed methods strategy used to pull all of the data together. This strategy was integrative and has been used commonly in mixed methods research studies (McMillan, 2015). After looking through Qualtrics and the thematic analysis approach, I was able to pull quantitative and qualitative similarities and differences together. The frequency tables and coded themes were built into agreements or disagreements. Although they may or may not have been the most prevalent themes in the entire dataset, the themes captured an important element that tied the entire research study together with the quantitative results (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Because of having a convergent mixed method design, the strategy was merged data analysis (Caracelli & Greene, 1993; McMillan, 2015). This was a technique that showed how the various types of data compared (Caracelli & Greene, 1993; McMillan, 2015). Merged data analyses may also have the suggested need for future research studies and analyses (McMillan, 2015). The findings for this particular research study should be found and explained more in Chapter 4, and the discussions and connections to the literature should be found in Chapter 5.

Ethical Considerations

As research increases for college sexual violence, ethical guidelines were important to mention in order to protect vulnerable populations. The biggest risk to participants was the potential for participants to experience negative and/or traumatic

feelings regarding their experiences with sexual violence. As such, I ensured that all of the participants' information was confidential, and I explained throughout the process that they could opt out of the process at any time. All answers to the quantitative survey questions and the qualitative interview questions were not shared with anyone. Since the participants could also have been my peers, because of our affiliation as students at the same institution, I ensured that strict measures were taken to keep confidentiality in place.

Chapter IV

Findings

Using an online cross-sectional survey and a semi-structured interview technique, this mixed methods study presents both quantitative and qualitative research findings. These findings support the literature found on the research problem, as well as provide points for further discussion, practice, and future research studies. This chapter covers the overall response rate of the entire study, the profiles of both the quantitative and qualitative samples, and the analyses for both datasets.

Overall Response Rate

There was more participation and contribution to this study than originally anticipated. There was a recruitment email (Appendix D) sent out to all enrolled undergraduate Rowan students, which was a total of 16,874 students. This was the population for the study. After data collection was closed and concluded, there were 485 survey responses, including the partial responses. Excluding the incomplete responses, there was a total of 301 students that fully completed the survey. After three weeks of data collection, there were 301 responses to the survey and eight (8) completed 30-minute interviews.

Since 301 students fully responded to the survey, the complete response rate was about 1.8%. Including the partial responses, the response rate would have been about 2.9%. The calculated percentage of the students participating in the interview out of the entire population (43 out of 16,874) was about 0.25%. The calculated percentage of the students participating in the interview out of the survey pool (43 out of 301) was about

14.3%. Out of the 43 students yearning to contribute to the interviews, the response rate (eight out of 43) was about 18.6%.

After the survey, the participants were given the option to provide their Rowan email addresses to further contribute in the study if they were interested. This included participating in a 30-minute Zoom interview. Out of the 301 complete responses to the survey, there were 43 participants who wanted to do the interview. Later on, after sending recruitment emails to all 43 participants, the final number of interviews conducted was eight (8).

Reason for Closing the Study

After recruiting participants for the study via email, there was an unforeseeable incident that occurred in students responding to one another through the email recruitment that was sent out through a university list server. Although some of the written responses were inappropriate, others were supportive and reassuring. Within 24 hours, this incident turned into an ethical event requiring the survey to be closed immediately. However, the positive outcomes outweighed the external threats and no student was put at risk.

Because of this incident, I decided to close the survey after 24 hours. I chose to do this for two logical reasons. The first reason was that I received more than enough responses to move on to the next steps of the study, and I felt comfortable with my standings in this thesis. The other reason was that I did not want this incident to escalate into something worse and potentially cause unnecessary harm. The response rate was positively affected, and there was overwhelming support from fellow staff, faculty, and

students. Although in the beginning it seemed like an obstacle, this incident actually benefitted the entire study as a whole.

As a result of this unforeseen incident, this study has now become more well-known and prominent on campus. It served as the “eye-opener” to contribute towards ending the negative culture of sexual violence on college campuses. This incident also became my motivation to finish this study and thesis with confidence.

Profile of the Quantitative Sample

The participants for the quantitative half of the study consists of all enrolled undergraduate Rowan University students, ranging from freshmen to seniors. Regardless of their ranking in the university, it technically matters more about how many credits the participants have completed at the university. The quantitative tool for this study is a survey. The survey was distributed to all enrolled undergraduate Rowan University students, which was a total of 16,874 students, on Thursday, February 11th, 2021. The data collection for the survey ended 24 hours after initial distribution for previously mentioned reasons. A one-week time window was created for other survey responses to be submitted, because some of them were considered partial responses.

The total number of surveys distributed is 16,874 (N), with a total of 301 complete responses being collected (n). Again, the calculated response rate is 1.8%. Table 1 displays the participants’ demographics, or their profiles, of all surveys collected. It is important to include this table of information, because the data contributes to answering the research questions for the study, particularly pertaining to Research Question 1.

The majority of the participants are of the Caucasian/White race, which is 213 participants (70.76%). In the gender category, participants most frequently identify themselves as Cisgender Women (177 participants, 58.80%). Data from the survey also shows that 146 (48.50%) responses were collected from participants within the age range of 21 to 23 years. The highest percentage of credits belonging to the participants is 44.15% (132 participants), claiming they currently have taken 90-120 credits or more at Rowan University. The data also shows that 198 (66.00%) participants report that they live off-campus, while 102 (34.00%) participants say that they live on-campus.

Table 1

Participants' Demographics (n=301)

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Racial/Ethnic Identification		
White/Caucasian	213	70.76%
Asian/Pacific Islander	20	6.64%
Hispanic/Latinx	18	5.98%
African American/Black	29	9.63%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1	0.33%
Prefer not to disclose	6	1.99%
Multiracial	10	3.32%
Other	4	1.33%
Gender		
Cisgender Man	95	31.56%
Cisgender Woman	177	58.80%
Transgender Man	5	1.66%
Transgender Woman	3	1.00%
Prefer not to disclose	5	1.66%
Self-Identify	16	5.32%

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Age		
18-20	129	42.86%
21-23	146	48.50%
24 or older	26	8.64%
Credits (Year)		
0-30+ credits	43	14.38%
30-60+ credits	54	18.06%
60-90+ credits	70	23.41%
90-120+ credits	132	44.15%
Housing Status		
On-campus	102	34.00%
Off-campus	198	66.00%

Analysis of the Data

The survey questions are organized into three categories (Appendix B). The first five questions focus on the profile of the students (Table 1). This includes race/ethnicity, gender, age, number of credits currently taken, and whether a participant has lived on or off Rowan's main campus. Again, these statistics can also be described as the participants' demographics. The second category of questions fixate on students' perceptions, such as awareness, involvement, effectiveness, and marketing techniques related to Rowan's sexual violence initiatives and programs. The final section of the survey is dedicated to open-ended questions, which can be identified as qualitative research contribution. These questions ask what students like the most about the sexual violence initiatives, if appropriate, and whether there are any suggestions for them that

they would like to expand on in order to improve the programs. These particular questions are structured to invite participants to share their true opinions on a topic so sensitive and so prominent on college campuses.

Table 2 simply displays participants' answers in the category of awareness of sexual violence programs at Rowan University. I list a total of seven sexual violence programs/prevention programs, while allowing participants to choose "Other" if there is an initiative I overlooked or mistakenly left out of the study. The programs are: Title IX Student Summit; Office of Student Equity and Compliance (OSEC) Advisory Council; Healthy Campus Initiatives' "Take Back the Night" event; Rowan University Title IX Office; Rowan University Title IX policies and reporting services; Sexual Violence Prevention Program; and Green Dot Bystander Intervention. According to Qualtrics data analysis and reports, there is about a total of 295 (*n*) respondents for the awareness category. The results can be found below.

Table 3 has the purpose of displaying whether participants have ever been involved with any of the mentioned sexual violence programs at Rowan. There is about a total of 283 participants (*n*) that responded to this question in the survey. Overall, there is a low involvement rate with the programs. According to the data results, total participants who answered "Yes" for being involved in the programs ranges from three participants to 27 participants (1.07% to 9.57%).

Table 2*Awareness of Rowan University's Sexual Violence Initiatives/Programs (n≈295)*

Response - Yes	<i>f</i>	%
Title IX Student Summit	130	44.07%
OSEC Advisory Council	77	26.10%
Healthy Campus Initiatives' "Take Back the Night" event	138	46.94%
Rowan University Title IX Office	151	51.54%
Rowan University Title IX policies and reporting services	166	56.27%
Sexual Violence Prevention Program	118	40.00%
Green Dot Bystander Intervention	104	35.37%

Table 3*Involvement with Rowan University's Sexual Violence Initiatives/Programs (n≈283)*

Response – Yes	<i>f</i>	%
Title IX Student Summit	12	4.24%
OSEC Advisory Council	3	1.07%
Healthy Campus Initiatives' "Take Back the Night" event	27	9.57%
Rowan University Title IX Office	12	4.26%
Rowan University Title IX policies and reporting services	19	6.79%
Sexual Violence Prevention Program	17	6.01%
Green Dot Bystander Intervention	17	6.05%

The next part of the perception category is dedicated to overall effectiveness.

Figures 1 to 7 display the results clearly and in an organized fashion in the forms of bar graphs. These bar graphs have three or more categories to report on; therefore, it is the most appropriate choice to display the data. The x-axis shows the genders of the sample, and the y-axis shows the frequencies for each answer. Described as how the programs are

working and impacting students, effectiveness is divided into three groups: very effective, somewhat effective, and not effective.

The survey results show that most of the participants who answered this question picked “N/A.” From reading the figures and the numbers that correspond, perhaps most participants may not have enough information or input to give their opinion on the overall effectiveness of the programs.

Figure 1

Effectiveness of Title IX Student Summit

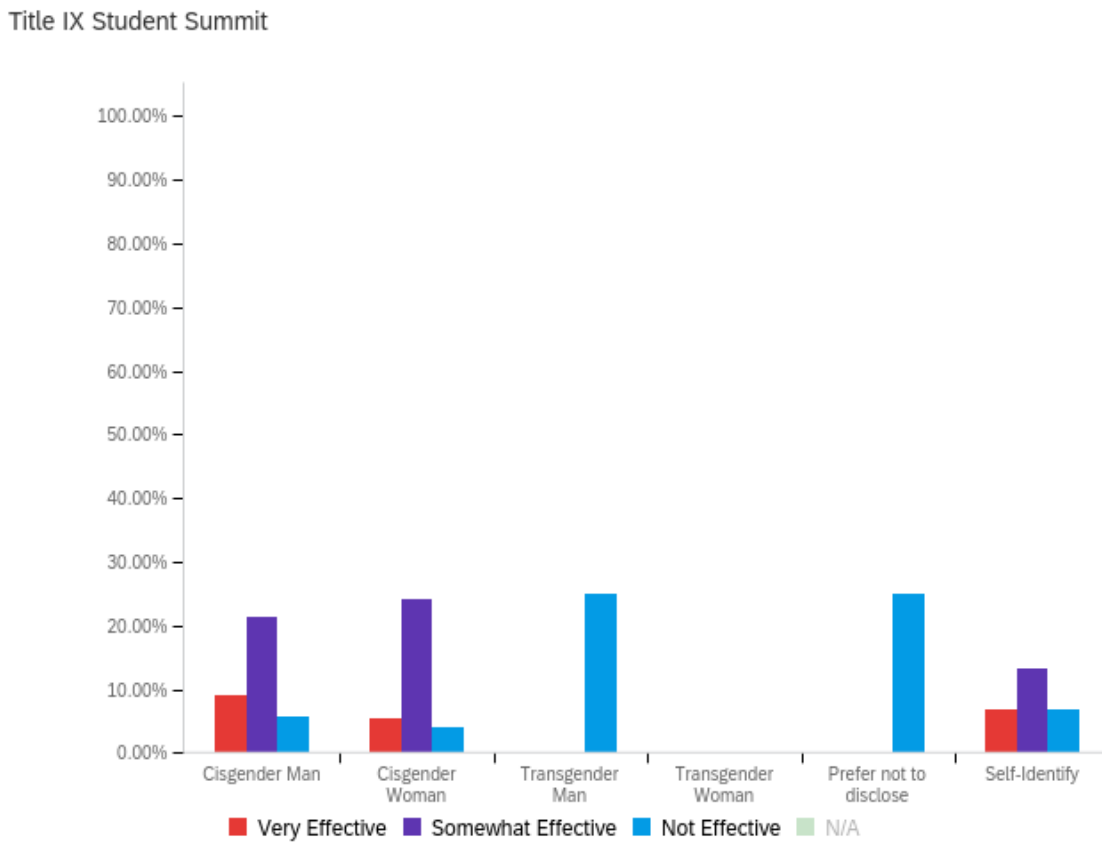


Figure 2

Effectiveness of OSEC Advisory Council

Office of Student Equity and Compliance (OSEC) Advisory Council

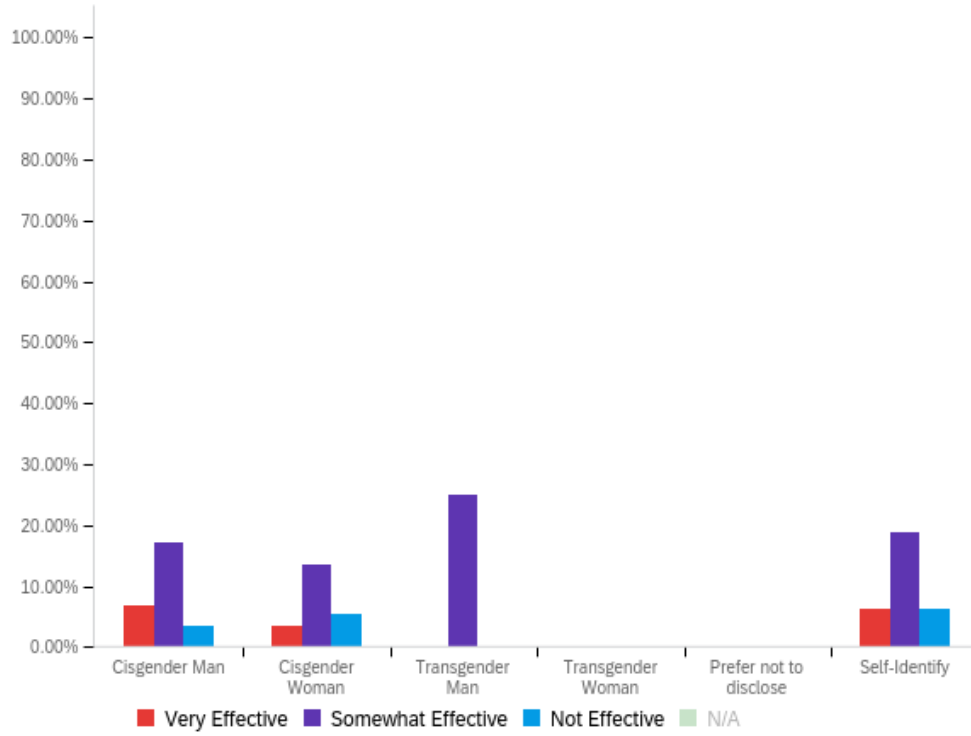


Figure 3

Effectiveness of Healthy Campus Initiatives' "Take Back the Night"

Healthy Campus Initiatives' "Take Back the Night" event

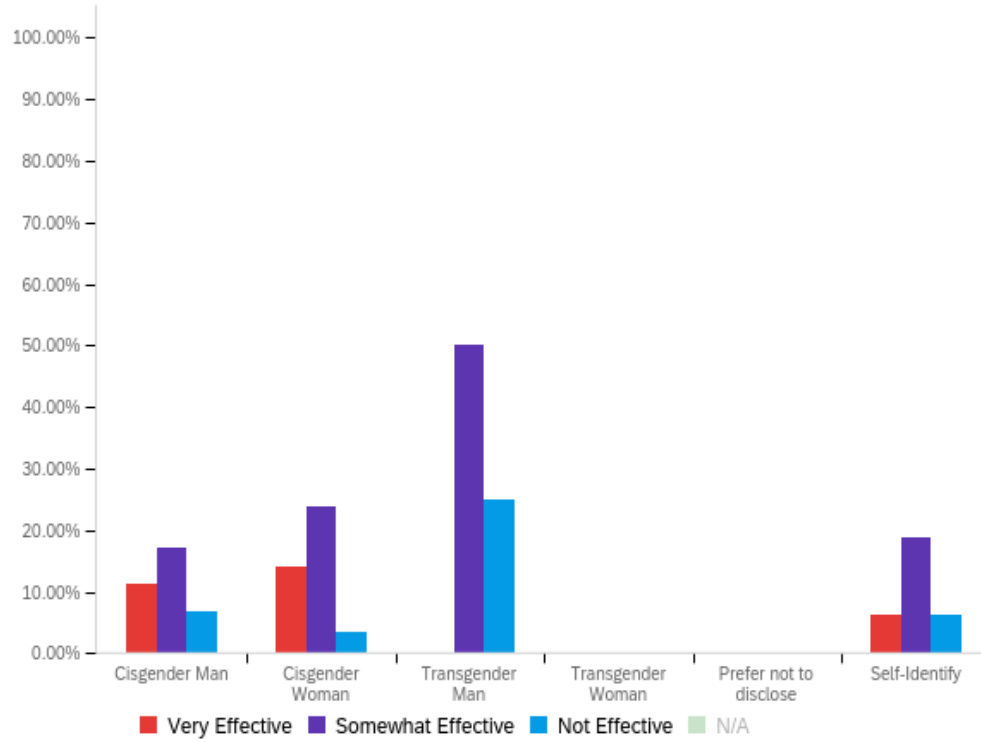


Figure 4

Effectiveness of Rowan University Title IX Office

Rowan University Title IX Office

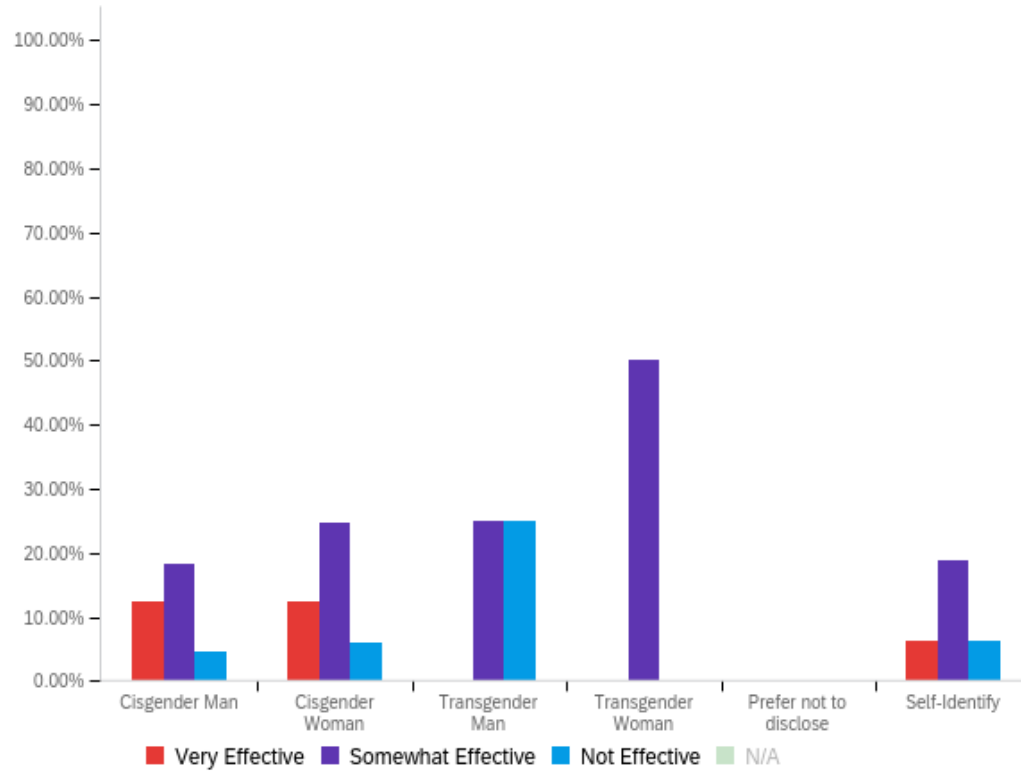


Figure 5

Effectiveness of Rowan University Title IX policies and reporting services

Rowan University Title IX policies and reporting services

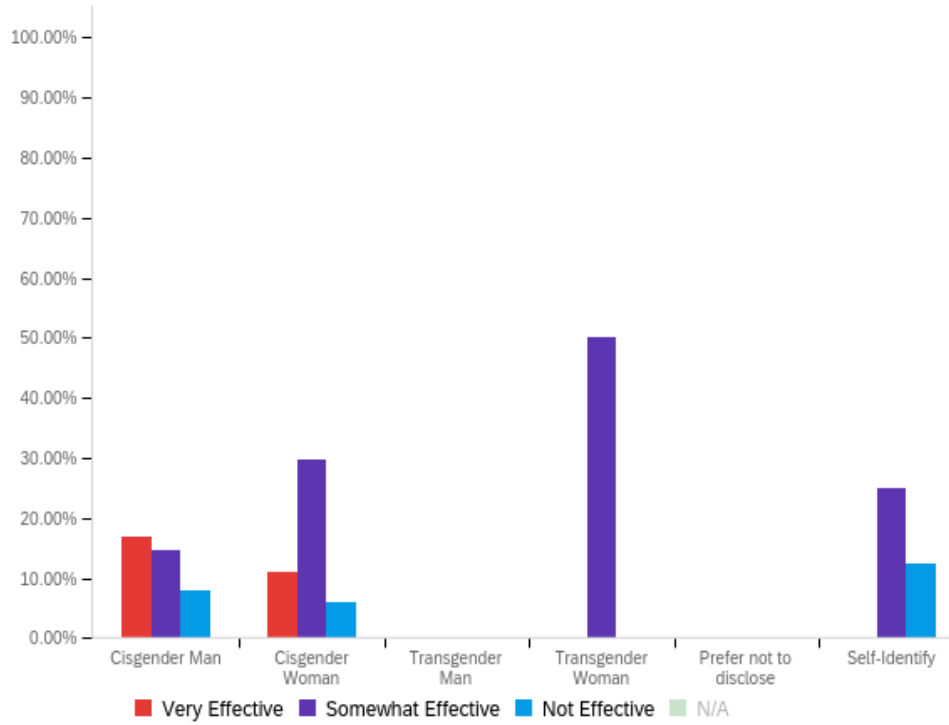


Figure 6

Effectiveness of Sexual Violence Prevention Program

Sexual Violence Prevention Program

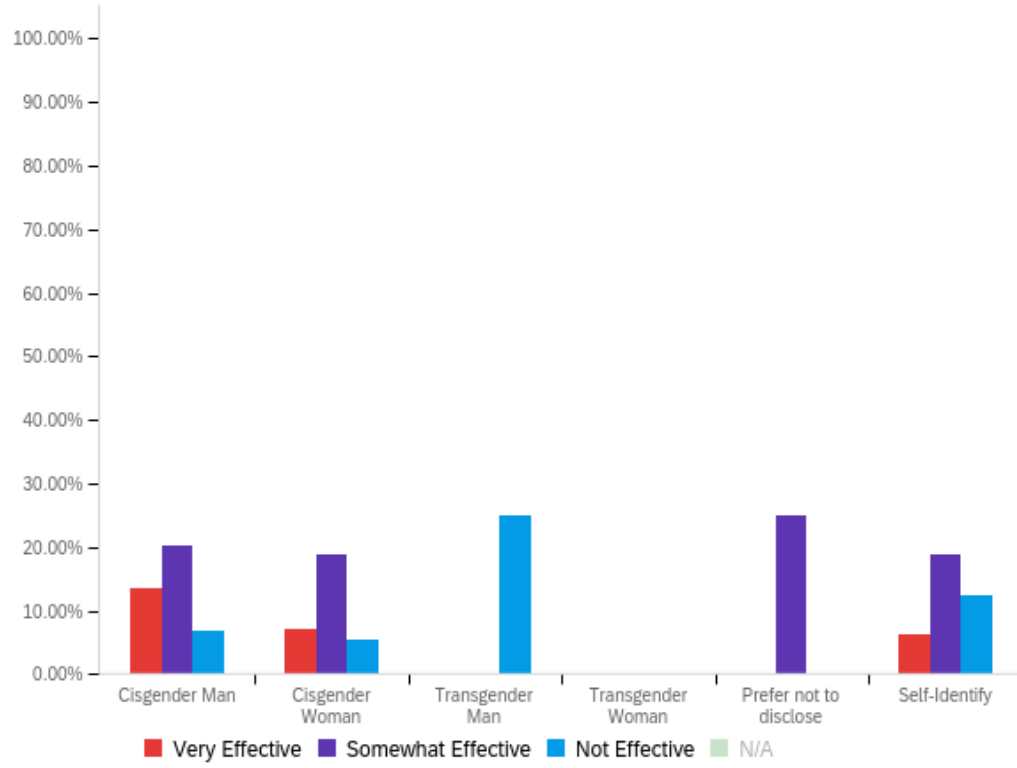


Figure 7

Effectiveness of Green Dot Bystander Intervention

Green Dot Bystander Intervention

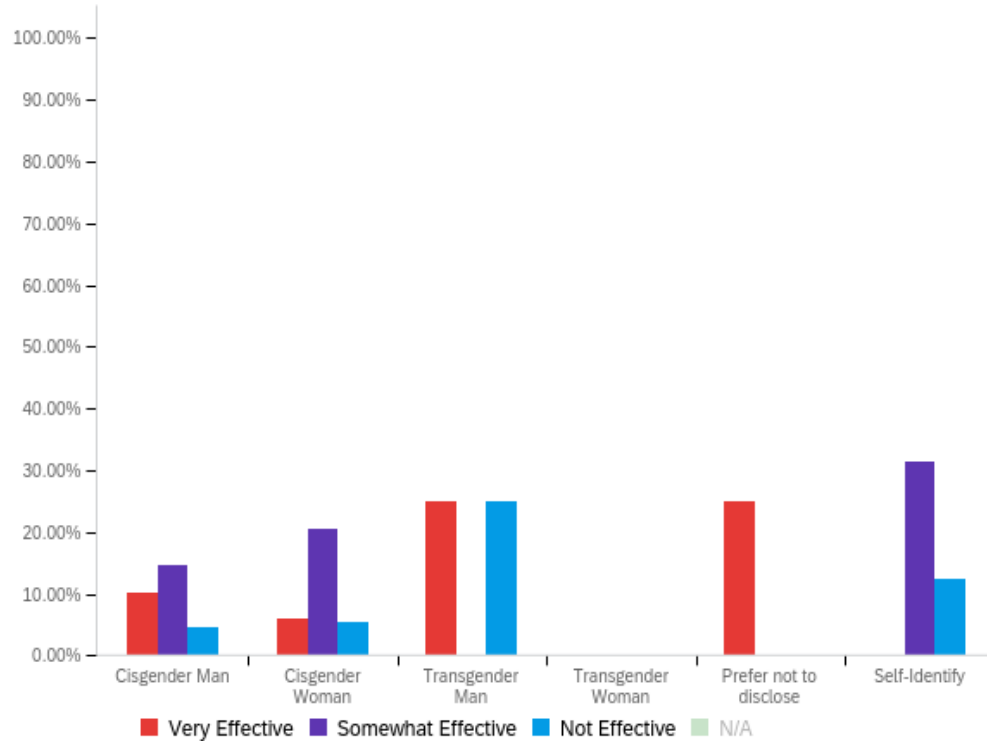


Table 4 is dedicated to the data that revolves around whether participants have heard about the sexual violence initiatives at Rowan University. This question aims towards the overall learning about or of the programs based on the participants' perceptions. In other words, how is the word being spread across campus? How do students know about these programs or, more importantly, do they? This question is formatted with check boxes so that participants can choose more than one answer if they need to. There is also an "Other" option in case there is another way a participant has heard of the programs. The total number of participants who answered at least once is 572 (*n*).

According to the dataset, the most popular way of spreading the word about the sexual violence programs is through the Rowan University email system, specifically through the Rowan Announcer. There are 167 (29.20%) participants who checked off this selection. The second most popular choice is word of mouth, which means conversations between participants and their colleagues, friends, or faculty/staff. There are 95 (16.61%) participants who selected this choice. On the other hand, there are choices that were not as prevalent, such as the Rowan University calendar (23, 4.02%) and internet flyers (31, 5.42%).

Table 4

Learning of Rowan University's Sexual Violence Initiatives/Programs (n=572)

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Rowan University email/Rowan Announcer	167	29.20%
Flyers on-campus	81	14.16%
Internet flyers	31	5.42%
Rowan University website	75	13.11%
Word of mouth	95	16.61%
Social Media	50	8.74%
Rowan University calendar	23	4.02%
Other	50	8.74%

The final part of the survey consists of two open-ended questions. The first question asks participants what they like the most about one or more of the sexual violence programs. The second question then asks them if there are any suggestions that they would like to provide about the programs or anything else related to sexual violence. Overall, there is a great response rate to this qualitative research. Out of 301 total respondents, there are 150 participants that decided to discuss what they like about the sexual violence programs. That is nearly half of the participants (49.83%). For the suggestions and improvements, 135 (44.85%) participants answered.

According to the dataset, participants tend to like that there is a constant help and support system for students who need it on campus. Some participants mention that they feel better knowing that Rowan does not ignore this concerning issue. Out of the 150 participants who answered this question, there are 14 (9.33%) participants who talk about help and support systems. Other participants feel that the information given out about the programs are very comprehensive, meaning they are educational and easy to understand.

Other answers for this question include: easily accessible; availability; ease of policies; involvement; inspiring; understand and listen; safe environment; sense of community; necessity; diversity and inclusion; existence; and seriousness. More importantly, other participants feel the need to report that there is plenty of awareness for the sexual violence programs. This leads to the next question's set of answers.

Even though some participants feel that awareness is present, others feel the opposite. The most popular answer for the suggestions question was making the sexual violence programs more known, which means spreading awareness, as well as creating more advanced sexual violence prevention methods. Out of the 135 participants who give their input, there are 50 (37.04%) participants who explain that there needs to be more awareness about sexual violence and Rowan's sexual violence initiatives. Other answers for this question include: offer more help and support from Title IX; pace investigations faster; take the fear out of reporting; assign curfews; review policies annually; appeal to people's self-interests; hire rape trauma counselors; abstention from alcohol and drugs; support for transfer students; more freshmen dorm education; mandatory lectures; revise "safety tips;" advocate more for men and transgender voices; outreach for the LGBTQIA+ community; more availability; more programs; and awareness for faculty.

Although it seems like a good number of responses, there are ambiguities to some of the participants' answers. For the first open-ended question, many participants have written "N/A," "None," "No," "This does not apply to me," and more. These answers are not counted while I write the popular categories for data analysis purposes. The second open-ended question shows a similar strategy, with some of the participants saying, "I do not have any suggestions to give," "None," and more like these.

Tables 5 and 6 explain the best parts about Rowan’s sexual violence programs, and the suggestions for them that may follow. I decide to include the top five (5) answers for each question, as I tally through Qualtrics’ data analysis reports. As mentioned before, there are 150 (*n*) participants for the first open-ended question, and there are 135 (*n*) participants for the second open-ended question. The results are found below.

Table 5

Top 5 Benefits of Rowan University’s Sexual Violence Initiatives/Programs (n=150)

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Help and Support System	14	9.33%
Awareness	6	4.00%
Comprehensiveness	6	4.00%
Existence	6	4.00%
Availability	4	2.67%

Table 6

Top 5 Suggestions for Rowan University’s Sexual Violence Initiatives/Programs (n=135)

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
More known (awareness)	50	37.04%
Taking the fear out of reporting	4	2.96%
Mandatory lectures for students	4	2.96%
Outreach for the LGBTQIA+ community	3	2.22%
More support	2	1.48%

The final table (Table 7) presents the perceptions of the entire sample in two groups: Cisgender Men and Women, and Transgender Men and Women. This is in terms of whether these students are aware and involved of and with the sexual violence programs. This portrays a clarified understanding of how each group of students perceives everything. These findings are further discussed in Chapter 5.

Table 7

Perceptions of the Sample in Groups

Response - Yes	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Cisgender Man and Woman		
Awareness	89	89.62%
Involvement	11	7.67%
Transgender Man and Woman		
Awareness	3	86.67%
Involvement	0	0.00%

Profile of the Qualitative Sample

The participants for the qualitative half of the study consist of all enrolled undergraduate Rowan University students who signed up to complete an interview. The qualitative tool for this study is a semi-structured virtual Zoom interview. As mentioned before, a total of 43 students signed up to further contribute to the study through virtual Zoom interviews. The 43 interested participants were divided into four email groups. The

first email group was sent out on Friday, February 19th, 2021. After about three weeks of data collection and sending out reminders and final calls for each email group, only eight students completed interviews. The stratified random sampling technique was used to pick the participants using Microsoft Excel's random selection formula (McMillan, 2015). This technique was used, because I wanted to try and include participants with different demographics, such as age and gender.

Analysis of the Data

The interview questions are influenced by some of the survey questions (Appendix C). In other words, the questions serve to encourage the participants to explain more about their responses in the survey. This helps me, as the researcher, to uncover certain themes that emerge during the study, as well as answer one or both of the study's research questions. Each interview lasted 30 minutes, and there was a total of eight (8) interview questions. The interview began with a question asking the participants about themselves, or anything about them that would benefit the study. Some participants talked about their academic standing or enrollment year, programs involved with on-campus, and other information they felt as important for the study. No other identifiable information was collected, as it was promised that participants' email addresses and names would be the only two, and would not be shared outside of the research study.

After concluding the questions and carefully listening to the interviews' transcriptions provided by Zoom, I was able to start coding. Coding in qualitative analysis relates and leads to the understanding of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). From

coding, I was able to create correlating qualitative themes. From there, I was able to organize potential sub-themes for those main themes.

There are three main themes: (a) lack of awareness for sexual violence programs; (b) sexual violence and its relationship to campus culture; and (c) options, availability, and opportunity for the programs. Within the first theme, there are four sub-themes: reporting services, marketing initiatives, freshmen-only focus, and relationship with university housing. The following themes and sub-themes are further explained in detail, connecting to the research questions when applicable.

Lack of Awareness

The first coded qualitative theme that was pulled from the interview is that there is an overall lack of awareness for the sexual violence initiatives and programs at Rowan University. Therefore, there is an overall lack of awareness for sexual violence itself on college campuses. This theme is appropriately supported by four sub-themes, as well as the literature based on this specific topic later discussed in Chapter 5. The four sub-themes are: reporting services; marketing initiatives; freshman-only focus; and relationship with university housing.

Reporting Services. A common sub-theme taken from the lack of awareness in sexual violence on college campuses is reporting services. Rowan University offers reporting services to students if they want to report a sexual violence-related incident. This is where Title IX is put into place. Participants recognize that Title IX protects students, but they do not understand to what extent it protects them. A particular participant explained, “I think we know about Title IX, but at the same time, we do not. I

feel like there is a lack of education on it. A simple training is not enough to help anyone understand how needed it is, how important it is, or how it actually protects us.” Also, some participants feel as though the reporting services are not enough in terms of support, or they feel like the services are not well known especially for the victims’/survivors’ benefit. Another participant elaborated, “I do not believe there is support for anyone who needs it. I also do not think that anyone really knows about the programs. It is hard to find them being advertised.”

Marketing Initiatives. Marketing initiatives serve as another sub-theme important to this study. This topic is brought up multiple times throughout the survey responses and the interview answers. Many participants believe that there is a lack of awareness of sexual violence on campus, because of the marketing initiatives or a lack thereof. Participants explain that they are “relieved and glad” that there are marketing plans for the Rowan sexual violence programs, but they are concerned that they are not seeing them enough for the students who really need to benefit from them. A particular participant said, “I have not had any interaction with the programs myself, but I do know that I want other students who need them to see it marketed around campus or even off-campus. They should be advertised everywhere, as much as possible.” These answers also sound similar to the reporting services sub-theme.

Freshman-Only Focus. Another sub-theme that emerged from the first theme is that there is a freshman-only focus for sexual violence programs. Many participants mention in the interview that they learned about these programs early in their college career. The second participant reflected, “I remember when I was a freshman that I had to take this course before I came to campus. I did not have to take it again. It was a little

training course that taught us about sexual violence and Title IX.” The participants elaborate on this topic by saying that they were also required to complete the course about sexual violence on college campuses before coming to Rowan for the first time.

Many participants feel that sexual violence awareness is targeted more towards freshmen learning about it rather than the entire student body. One particular participant from the eighth interview offers a suggestion to require all students to take the sexual violence awareness course before the fall semester starts. This participant explained, “I do remember taking the course only once. That was not enough. I would suggest that Rowan makes all students take it every year, or every semester.” This keeps the information fresh in their minds and keeps the students updated about federal policies and university regulations regarding sexual violence.

Relationship with University Housing. This sub-theme focuses on university housing and its relationship to sexual violence prevention and awareness. During the interviews, some participants briefly elaborate on their experiences as a Residential Assistant (RA) and their responsibilities as mandatory reporters. The participant from the sixth interview explained, “I was an RA, and we were mandatory reporters. Once we heard something, we had to report it.” Other participants talk about how they have seen Residential Assistants in action and handling similar scenarios. Both of these situations have a connection tied with them as explained by interview participants: for the amount of work Residential Assistants have to do with sexual violence prevention, it is still not enough to be reciprocated as awareness.

A particular interviewee from the fourth interview explains how she was an RA and she had to complete a heavy workload for sexual violence training and reporting. This participant said, “I remember that we had to do so much and undergo that sexual violence training for being RAs. I believe it was useful, but it was a lot of work.” However, this participant feels as though it is not enough to get through to the students or it is not enough to create awareness, despite the amount of work they underwent during the training.

Sexual Violence and Campus Culture

The second coded qualitative theme is that there is a campus culture for sexual violence. This campus culture is mostly negative and seems to be ignored, as described in detail in Chapter 2. Especially after the challenging experience of the email incident, it is clear that, even in this day and age, this campus culture still exists on college campuses.

From the interviewees’ answers and explanations to the interview questions, it is clear that they care about sexual violence prevention and creating ways to make awareness prominent. For example, an interviewee from the second conducted interview explains how awareness belongs in a pathological dimension. The participant said, “Awareness is so important. It belongs in a pathological dimension, which means that awareness only happens if feelings and emotions are involved. We need students to feel this way.” Without the feelings of compassion and respect from the entire student body, the negative campus culture for sexual violence will remain. The interviewee then explains that, for that reason and many others, sexual violence programs are put into place on college campuses. “This is why we have these programs on our campus. It is

extremely important for our student body. Hopefully, these programs continue to bring sexual violence awareness to light.”

Options, Availability, and Opportunity

The third coded qualitative theme is that there are many options to choose from in terms of the sexual violence programs, as well as their rate of availability and opportunity. Although some of the participant responses seem negative, there are positive answers, too. Many participants think that it is beneficial that Rowan offers multiple sexual violence programs. They are described as options, so that students can find the right resources or initiatives for themselves personally. One particular participant explained, “I like how there are many options to choose from. Students can find what they need or what works best for them through these options.”

According to the open-ended answers from the survey and interview, participants also explain that the overall availability rate for sexual violence initiatives on Rowan’s campus is satisfactory. The programs provided by the university are available often for Rowan students. A participant said, “Anything is available for anyone, and I feel like that is acceptable enough.” Availability goes hand-in-hand with accessibility. The Rowan sexual violence support services for students have been easily accessible, even though marketing is described as lacking. Participants describe this availability as “being easy to access whenever someone needs something.”

The last segment of this theme concerns opportunity. According to participant responses from the interview, there is a good amount of opportunity for these programs. In other words, the participants explain that there is room for growth, and there is

potential for the programs to improve and thrive. One participant elaborated on this, saying, “I am glad that we have these programs, but there is still work to be done. I think they have great opportunities to grow and improve in order to better help the students.” Another way that participants describe opportunity is that the choice is always open. The seventh interviewee explained, “Students can choose which program they want to use, and I like that these programs are always open. They never shut anyone out, and they give students the freedom to choose how they want to use the programs.” Students have the choice to use these resources if they want to report a particular incident or if they want to learn more about the programs.

Mixed Methods – Merged Data

To conclude data analysis for both the quantitative and the qualitative datasets, merged data is used to discover the correlating numbers and themes that, as one, work together in this study. Some of the participants’ answers are very different from what others have said in the survey and/or interview. However, there are a few key words or phrases that keep recurring, as it is taught that this is what merged data would consist of.

According to Tables 2, 5, and 6, and the qualitative interview responses, awareness is a popular key word when it comes to sexual violence initiatives on Rowan’s campus. This is the most frequent number recorded in the survey, and the biggest recurring theme in the interview. Awareness is discussed both positively and negatively. For Table 2, there is not any noticeable difference in numbers, with who was aware of the programs and who was not aware of the programs. The reported numbers seem similar or

close together to make it seem almost equal. Simply put, some students are aware, and some students are not aware.

Additionally, Table 5 clearly shows that awareness is a positive thing that is currently happening on Rowan's campus for the knowledge of sexual violence programs. However, Table 6 explains that there is not enough awareness that is being brought to students for them to actually realize the available sexual violence programs. The semi-structured interviews have the same recurring theme of awareness. In this case, it is more of a lack of awareness. During seven out of the eight total interviews, each respondent talks about how Rowan's sexual violence programs need to be more known, especially for the students who need the best support services.

While merging the two datasets together, there are other results that can contribute greatly to this research study and its research questions. This includes the offered availability of the sexual violence programs to the students; the reporting services provided by Rowan's Title IX policies; and the amount of support given from the programs and the university as a whole.

Availability is one of the top five positives about the sexual violence programs, as analyzed through the qualitative portion of the survey. It also belongs to the group of themes for the qualitative interviews. Participants believe that the availability rate for the programs is satisfactory. According to some of the participants, the reporting services at Rowan are present, but others think that it contributes to the lack of awareness, where it is not projected or advertised enough on campus. The same can go for the overall support for a concern such as this. Participants think that there is a strong support system for

victims and survivors of sexual violence, yet other participants think there needs to be more effort in those support systems in order to do better for the students (Table 6). All of the common themes and results can be explained more in detail and in correspondence to the research questions next in Chapter 5.

Chapter V

Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This final chapter will summarize the research study and offer new or recurring suggestions for sexual violence initiatives on Rowan University's main campus based on student perceptions. This chapter will also answer the research questions developed at the beginning of the study by looking into both the quantitative and qualitative research methods conducted in the study. Recommendations for practice and future research will also be discussed in terms of future implementation and success of sexual violence initiatives, in order to promote sexual violence awareness.

Limitations

It was important to reiterate the limitations of this mixed methods research study. Sensitivity of the topic being studied was the biggest limitation, and that was known since the beginning of the study. Sensitive topics can sometimes limit the participation for certain research studies, meaning participants may not feel comfortable with contributing to the study. I believe it was important to understand the difficulties behind something like sexual violence. Therefore, attempting to respond or participate may have been difficult from the participants' perspectives.

It was assumed that the participants would answer the survey completely and honestly. However, that may not always be the outcome, because again, this was in connection to a sensitive topic. Also, the students who chose to complete the survey may not have wanted to participate in the interview. I hoped that five to 10 participants would

sign up to partake in a virtual interview in order for me, as the researcher, to further investigate the research problem.

Another potential limitation would be the lack of transgender statistics in gender diversity at Rowan University. I could not find any information regarding the experiences of students within the transgender community specifically at Rowan University. This was a limitation in that the study cannot address the perspectives or experiences of transgender students comprehensively. For this study, there were only five reported transgender men and three reported transgender women who participated. In other categories, such as “prefer not to disclose” and “self-identify,” perhaps participants might have felt more comfortable with using those choices to report their demographics.

The COVID-19 health pandemic played a huge role in this study. I started thinking about this thesis topic exactly one year ago in 2020. At that time, I was unsure of how this study was going to be developed. Still, I believe that the pandemic prevented some participants from giving this study their full attention based on the fact that they were handling many other responsibilities simultaneously. On the other hand, the fact that this study was virtual helped some students more than others. The overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has made it extremely difficult for students to engage with additional work and labor, on top of their other responsibilities.

Summary of the Study

The summarizing process is a critical point at which a researcher’s insights shape what is learned from the research study (Axinn & Pearce, 2006). This thesis explored the overall role and awareness of Rowan University’s sexual violence programs through the

perceptions of undergraduate students. A major goal of this study was to investigate these perceptions while comparing them to the independent variables of the study, which were the student demographics. The most important demographic for this study was gender, because it is the most often reported demographic studied for sexual violence research.

There was an online cross-sectional survey and semi-structured virtual interviews used for data collection in this research study. The population of this study was collected before the sampling techniques were implied. The final sample of the study was divided into three subgroups based on gender: cisgender men (95), cisgender women (177), and transgender men and women (8). There was a total of 301 completed survey responses, and eight (8) interviews were conducted out of the 43 individuals who signed up to participate, choosing the sample at random via Microsoft Excel.

After data collection, the data analysis process began and was conducted using Qualtrics and the qualitative thematic data approach. Qualtrics was used to measure quantitative percentages, frequencies, and other descriptive factors. The thematic data approach was used to determine the common themes and sub-themes from the qualitative interviews. The conclusion of data analysis included using the merged data technique to bring both the quantitative and qualitative data together as one, reviewing whether the two datasets agree or disagree.

Brief Review of Literature

Earlier in Chapter 2, there was plenty of scholarly, peer-reviewed literature that focused on current sexual violence statistics; sexual violence programs on different college campuses, including Rowan University; the campus culture that sexual violence

has embedded across higher education institutions; and sexual violence's relationship and connection to mental health and wellbeing of college students. While prominently known, sexual violence is a concerning issue in the United States and especially in higher education (Clay et al., 2019; Cruz, 2020; Dills et al., 2016; Jessup-Anger et al., 2018; Moorman & Osborne, 2016; Napolitano, 2014; Paul & Gray, 2011; Wooten & Mitchell, 2016). Therefore, there was a valid amount of literature and research on such a popular subject.

Research has shown that anyone of any demographic can be affected by sexual violence, whether it is through surviving it or witnessing it as a bystander. The most popular group of individuals to experience sexual violence in their lifetime is women, including college women (Finley & Corty, 1993; Streng & Kamimura, 2015; Wagner, 2017). However, there is little to no information about transgender statistics, or reports from the transgender community. It is even more challenging to find those statistics related to higher education. They are an understudied and underreported group, and it is very uncommon to find anything as such to contribute to sexual violence research (Garvey et al., 2014; Paludi, 2016; Perez & Hussey, 2014; Potter et al., 2020).

Colleges throughout the United States have implemented Title IX and its policies into their own curriculums and strategic plans. They have also developed their own sexual violence programs and initiatives for the purpose of helping their students and spreading awareness through prevention methods and activities for everyone to partake in (Banyard et al., 2004; Burt, 1980; Hinck & Thomas, 1999; McMahon et al., 2014; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). Even though these programs are actively in place, a negative campus culture still exists. This is also alarming, because it is almost impossible to not understand

the common effects of sexual violence, especially for one's mental health and wellbeing (Brenner, 2013; Culture of Respect, 2018; The New York Times, 2004).

Discussion of Findings

This section will briefly cover the findings of the study. It will also explain how the findings contribute to answering the study's two significant research questions. After careful analysis, each research question can relate to the survey and interview responses.

Research Question 1

The first research question asked: What are the perceptions of students about sexual violence and support services at Rowan University?

This question was answered through both the survey and the interview. In the first part of the survey, which was the participant demographics, there was a question that asked participants what their gender was (Table 1). The results showed that undergraduate cisgender women were the majority of the participants (177; 58.80%). Following behind was undergraduate cisgender men, with 95 participants (31.56%). There were only five transgender men (1.66%) and three transgender women (1.00%) who answered the survey, whereas there were other participants who chose to self-identify on their own personal terms (16; 5.32%), or chose not to identify themselves (5; 1.66%).

In sum and on average, the participants who identified as transgender claimed that they were not aware of some of the sexual violence programs, and they were not involved with most of them (Table 7). For the effectiveness question (Figures 1 through 7), most

answers aimed at the programs not being effective or as effective, as well as “N/A.” However, they have heard of one or more of the programs through the Rowan Announcer or through word of mouth (Table 4). Therefore, compared to the rest of the student sample and based on their answers, transgender participants also believe that there is a lack of awareness and involvement with the programs, as well as a lack of effectiveness. Table 1 and Table 7 can be referred to if needed to explain further the different perceptions of the cisgender participants and the transgender participants.

The literature supported these answers in connection to Research Question 1. The perceptions of students in the transgender community are extremely needed and crucial in higher education research studies, since they are so underreported and understudied. Researchers are hardly engaging with, centering, and publishing their experiences and perceptions (Garvey et al., 2014; Paludi, 2016; Perez & Hussey, 2014; Potter et al., 2020). There could be many reasons as to why some of these students either do not participate in college research studies, or choose not to identify themselves for the studies (Garvey et al., 2014; Paludi, 2016; Perez & Hussey, 2014; Potter et al., 2020). College students have one or multiple identities, and they all should be respected and included in research, because it makes a significant difference in informing new policies and practices that support student well-being. Also, higher education institutions support and embrace diversity and inclusion, and it should be reflected within their programs and through future research studies.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked: What are the benefits and challenges, if any, of the support systems for sexual violence at Rowan University?

This question was answered using the survey and the interview. Based on the literature and the findings of the study, sexual violence programs are extremely needed on college campuses, and they all come with benefits and possible challenges. The survey and the interviews clearly displayed a balance between positive and negative feedback about Rowan's sexual violence programs and support systems, as given by the participants.

Table 5 and 6 supported this research question. Table 5 in Chapter 4 presented the top five benefits of Rowan's sexual violence initiatives and programs. Awareness was mentioned as a positive thing for the sexual violence programs, but by other participants, it was labeled as a negative thing. Therefore, awareness was a challenge. Thus, because there was a lack of awareness of Rowan's sexual violence programs, there was a lack of awareness for sexual violence as an issue itself. According to the participants, other benefits of the initiatives included a help and support system, comprehensiveness, existence, and availability (Table 5). These benefits were also discussed more in detail in the virtual interviews.

This particular question in the survey was optional. Out of the 301 complete survey responses, there were 150 responses to the open-ended question about the benefits and/or challenges of the sexual violence support programs at Rowan University, which was a 49.83% response rate. Out of the 150 participants who responded, only 70

participants discussed how they were unfamiliar with the programs, so they could not have an opinion on them (50% response rate). The rest of the participants talked about their experiences and the benefits of the programs, or they did not answer the question at all.

The literature supported these answers in connection to Research Question 2. Higher education institutions across the United States have created and implemented their own programs, or they use other programs adopted by other schools, such as “Take Back the Night” (Take Back the Night, 2019). Colleges have also applied Title IX and its policies into their own curriculums and strategic plans. The purpose of the sexual violence initiatives is to help the students and spread awareness of sexual violence through prevention methods for students to participate in (Banyard et al., 2004; Burt, 1980; Hinck & Thomas, 1999; McMahon et al., 2014; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). It is clear that Rowan University has taken the same initiative and created their own programs with multiple benefits to help the student body. Therefore, the benefits that were discussed in the survey and the interview answered the research question fully and were supported by previous research studies and articles.

Recommendations

In line with their responses, participants shared ways that Rowan University can improve sexual violence programs and initiatives to further help students and sexual violence victims/survivors. The challenges described in Table 6 were turned into possible recommendations for Rowan University’s sexual violence programs. These recommendations resulted from a question that was used both on the survey and the

interview. From what was discussed in Chapter 4, it was clear that participants were concerned about improving the sexual violence resources on Rowan's campus.

Table 6 supported these recommendations. Participants were able to identify certain suggestions for some or all of Rowan's sexual violence programs using the open-ended question format in the survey, as well as through the interview. Table 6 represented the top five suggestions for these programs. Of the data collected and analyzed, the most frequent suggestion was to raise awareness. To elaborate, participants offered the suggestion of making the programs more well-known across campus, therefore helping students learn more about them. Additionally, through the qualitative thematic data approach, the lack of awareness about sexual violence was a recurring theme, as well as marketing initiatives and reporting services as sub-themes.

The literature supported these recommendations. Again, programs across higher education have their benefits, but programs have their disadvantages or gaps as well (Banyard et al., 2004; Burt, 1980; Hinck & Thomas, 1999; McMahon et al., 2014; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). It is important to recognize those factors and critically develop initiatives geared towards improving programs for the benefit of the students. These recommendations can be useful in spearheading campus wide transformation.

Conclusions

The findings of this study contributed to the significance and positionality of the research problem, the purpose of the study, and the literature behind sexual violence and the programs offered on college campuses. The findings also supported the research questions for the study. All operational definitions described in Chapter 1 were

mentioned at least once throughout the study, whether it was in the literature review or the findings.

The results from this study had provided two conclusions. First, it was clear that there is a lack of awareness for Rowan's sexual violence initiatives. Since that is a current issue, it was also clear that the detrimental harm of sexual violence itself needs to be recognized more often. The role of sexual violence programs is a much needed one. Indeed, since this issue still exists, these programs serve to drastically increase awareness and potentially contribute to lowering these violent acts in the future. The undergraduate students at Rowan University recognized this. Second, undergraduate student perceptions were extremely useful and significant in research studies such as this one. These perceptions can be used to support the development of programming on campus geared towards sexual violence.

This study received more support than I could have ever imagined, especially in light of the unforeseen circumstance that arose. I received an extensive number of responses to the survey within the first 24 hours that it was published and sent out to the Rowan undergraduate community. I wanted to spread my sincere thanks to the students who chose to help and participate in the survey and/or interview. Every submission and every spoken word counted, and they are all truly appreciated.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the results of the study, the literature on this population/sample and research problem, and answers from participants, the following statements are presented as recommendations for practice:

1. Overall, the survey responses indicate that most students were aware of the sexual violence programs, but they did not know enough yet of the programs themselves. Therefore, the recommendation is that there is a lack of overall awareness that needs to be improved. That leads to the next recommendation.

2. The marketing for the sexual violence programs needs to be enhanced. The word needs to be spread in more effective ways. Although they are doing as best as they can to let students know that these programs are available, especially during a global health pandemic, it may not be enough to promote awareness of sexual violence. Also, for sexual violence victims/survivors, it is best for the programs to be known as much as possible.

3. Campus culture is a very important puzzle piece to higher education. Therefore, it is imperative to try and shift this culture in unique ways to end campus sexual violence. Because of the incident that happened during data collection, and the rapid response rate for the surveys and interviews, it was apparent that an existing campus culture was related to Rowan and sexual violence. The series of events throughout this study has proven that we must not give up in researching this topic, and we must not stop promoting sexual violence awareness to college students.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the results of this study, the following statements should be used as recommendations for future research:

1. Research studies should continue to focus on understudied or underreported student populations, such as students in the transgender community. There are not enough

numbers or explanations that contribute to these groups and what their opinions are on topics such as sexual violence. As it was mentioned previously in the Discussions of Findings section, college students have one or multiple identities, and they all should be respected and included in research, because it makes a significant difference in data collection.

2. Perceptions of students for any kind of research should always be taken into consideration. This should continue on through the future of higher education, because students are what make higher education exist and thrive. Student perceptions can help enhance the success of programs or activities across campus, or they can offer improvement suggestions to further drive those programs. Without students, higher education would simply be lost. Therefore, it is important to keep making research studies dedicated to students' opinions and thoughts. Every single one of them counts.

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

Date: 2-25-2021

IRB #: PRO-2020-132

Title: The Role and Awareness of Sexual Violence Initiatives at Rowan University through Undergraduate Students' Perceptions

Creation Date: 10-30-2020

End Date: 1-3-2022

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: Raquel Wright-Mair

Review Board: Glassboro/CMSRU

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Expedited	Decision	Approved
Submission Type	Incident	Review Type	Expedited	Decision	Noted

Key Study Contacts

Member	Alyssa Paluch	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	palucha8@students.rowan.edu
Member	Raquel Wright-Mair	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	wrightmair@rowan.edu
Member	Alyssa Paluch	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	palucha8@students.rowan.edu

Appendix B

Final Survey Instrument

Students' Perceptions of Sexual Violence Initiatives at Rowan University

Start of Block: Block 2

You are invited to participate in this online research study entitled "The Role and Awareness of Sexual Violence Initiatives at Rowan University through Undergraduate Students' Perceptions," exploring your experiences and knowledge of Rowan University's sexual violence initiatives.

You have been asked to be in this study, because you are a current Rowan University undergraduate student. The number of subjects aimed to be enrolled in this mixed methods research study will be 50-100 survey participants and 5-10 interview participants.

You, as a participant, will be given the option to decide whether you want to participate further in this study through a virtual interview. You may leave your email at the end of this survey so that the researcher can contact you. You should not feel obligated to do the interview if you do not feel comfortable.

The survey may take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, do not respond to this online survey. Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey.

The purpose of this study is to examine the undergraduate students' perceptions towards the benefits and challenges in reporting services and resources at Rowan University regarding sexual violence and Title IX. It will also investigate their perceptions of how sexual violence affects students in various, inevitable ways, including students' mental health and wellbeing. In addition, the study will investigate the underrepresentation of the LGBTQIA+ community in sexual violence reporting.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey. There may not be any direct benefit to you from participating in this study, but it will help to document the effectiveness of Rowan University's sexual violence initiatives based on your experiences if any. All of the given information you provide during said survey and/or interview will bring a positive light to the research process and the future of Rowan University's sexual violence programs and initiatives.

Your response will be kept confidential. The data will be stored in a secure computer file and the file will be destroyed once the data has been published. Any part of the research that is published as part of this study will not include your individual information. If you have any questions about the survey, you can contact the Principal Investigator at the address provided below, but you do not have to give your personal identification.

If you have any questions about taking part in this study or if you feel you may have suffered a research-related injury, you can call the Principal Investigator:

Dr. Raquel Wright-Mair
Rowan University Educational Services and Leadership
856-256-4711

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you can call:
Office of Research Compliance
(856) 256-4078– Glassboro/CMSRU
This study has been approved by the Rowan IRB, Pro-2020-132.

Please complete the questions below.

Are you at least 18 years old?

Yes

No

Are you voluntarily giving consent to participate in this survey?

Yes

No

End of Block: Block 2

Start of Block: Default Question Block

What is your race or ethnic identification?

- White/Caucasian
 - Asian/Pacific Islander
 - Hispanic/Latinx
 - African American/Black
 - American Indian/Alaskan Native
 - Prefer not to disclose
 - Multiracial
 - Other (please specify) _____
-

What is your gender?

- Cisgender Man
 - Cisgender Woman
 - Transgender Man
 - Transgender Woman
 - Prefer not to disclose
 - Self-Identify _____
-

What is your age range?

- 18-20
 - 21-23
 - 24 or older
-

How many credit hours have you completed so far at Rowan University? Please include this semester's credits.

- 0-30+ credits
 - 30-60+ credits
 - 60-90+ credits
 - 90-120+ credits
-

Do you live on Rowan's main campus (Glassboro)?

- Yes
 - No
-

Please indicate whether you are aware of each of the following programs, and indicate whether you have been involved with them in any way. Involvement may include participation in or attending an event or program.

	Awareness		Involvement	
	Yes	No	Yes	No

Title IX Student Summit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Office of Student Equity and Compliance (OSEC) Advisory Council	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Healthy Campus Initiatives' "Take Back the Night" event	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rowan University Title IX Office	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rowan University Title IX policies and reporting services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sexual Violence Prevention Program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Green Dot Bystander Intervention	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other: please identify	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Please indicate to what extent do you feel each program is effective (very effective, somewhat effective, or not effective) in terms of their goals and objectives in helping or reaching students. If you do not have experience with any of the programs, please press N/A.

Then, indicate how familiar you are with the programs as well (very familiar, somewhat familiar, or unfamiliar).

	Effectiveness				Familiarity		
	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Effective	N/A	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Unfamiliar

Title IX Student Summit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Office of Student Equity and Compliance (OSEC) Advisory Council	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Healthy Campus Initiatives' "Take Back the Night" event	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rowan University Title IX Office	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rowan University Title IX policies and reporting services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sexual Violence Prevention Program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Green Dot Bystander Intervention	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other: please identify	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How do you know about these programs? Check all that apply.

- Rowan University email/Rowan Announcer
- Flyers on-campus
- Internet flyers
- Rowan University website
- Word of mouth
- Social media
- Rowan University calendar
- Other: please explain

- N/A

What did you like the most about Rowan's sexual violence programs? Explain.

Do you have any suggestions or comments to improve Rowan's sexual violence programs?

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: Block 1

The survey you have just completed is completely anonymous. The answers you provided for this anonymous survey will not be traced back to you. If you choose to participate in the second part of this research study, which is the interview, the personally identifiable information you provide cannot be linked to your survey responses.

If you agree to participate in the 30-minute interview, held virtually via Zoom, you will be later contacted by the researcher to schedule an interview at a time and day that is convenient for you. Your continued interest and participation is appreciated, and thank you for taking part in this study.

Would you like to be contacted for a 30-minute Zoom interview?

Yes

No

End of Block: Block 1

Appendix C

Final Interview Instrument

Interview (Oral)

- These 5-10 students have agreed to participate in the interview.

1. Tell me about yourself. What do you want me to know about you?
2. Tell me about your experiences with one or more of the sexual violence programs at Rowan University.
3. What marketing initiatives do you notice about these programs? How is the word being spread?
4. Do you feel as though these programs are effective? Do they help the students? Why or why not?
5. Have you ever attended an event held by one or more of Rowan's sexual violence programs? What was it like?
6. Please tell me your suggestions for improvement based on Rowan's sexual violence programs and initiatives. What can we do better to help our students know more about them or use them more often?
7. How important is sexual violence awareness to you?
8. What else have I not asked but that you would like me to know?

Appendix D

Recruitment Email

Dear Students:

Hello! My name is Alyssa Paluch, and I am a graduate student in the Higher Education Administration Master's Program here at Rowan University. I write to you today to invite you to participate in my research study entitled "The Roles and Awareness of Sexual Violence Initiatives at Rowan University through Undergraduate Students' Perceptions."

You are eligible for this study, because you are an enrolled undergraduate student here at Rowan. The study will be conducted at Rowan University, in James Hall.

The data collection for this research study includes an online survey and an optional Zoom interview. Participation is voluntary. There may be no direct benefit to you, but by participating in this study, you will contribute to documenting the effectiveness of Rowan University's sexual violence initiatives based on your experiences, if any. Also, you may choose to participate in an interview conducted at a later time. If you are interested, please provide your email at the end of the survey.

The survey may take up to 5 minutes of your time. Your responses will be kept confidential. The data will be stored in a password-protected computer file, and the file will be deleted and destroyed once the study is completed. If you do not wish to participate in the survey, please do not complete it. Completing the survey tells us that you are an active participant.

(Interview email) If you want to participate in the virtual Zoom interview, please complete the following consent form and send it back to me via email.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact me at my email address or phone number. You may also reach out to the principal investigator monitoring my study:

Dr. Raquel Wright-Mair

Rowan University Educational Services and Leadership
856-256-4711

This study has been Rowan IRB-approved, Pro-2020-132.

Thank you for your time, and have a great day!

Sincerely,

Alyssa Paluch, palucha8@students.rowan.edu, 609-846-5580