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Main Assertions

PROPOSED TOPIC: Sexual assault on college campuses

PREVIOUS PROPOSED QUESTION: Should the U.S. government allow college
administrations to handle sexual assault cases?

NEW PROPOSED QUESTION: How should the U.S. government handle sexual assault policy
on college campuses?

Tolentino, J. (2018, February 9). Is there a smarter way to think about sexual assault on campus?

The New Yorker. Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/ycal5zz3>.

Tolentino's article describes a team of students and faculty from Columbia College who are looking to find a way to rethink college responses to sexual assault reports. This team has been working on a \$2.2 million research project titled "Sexual Health Initiative to Foster Transformation" (SHIFT) to research the sexual behavior of Columbia students. These studies consisted of a series of interviews and surveys over three years. SHIFT research methods include participant observation, where observers would hang around student hotspots such as bars, football games, parties and so on. Then, the SHIFT team conducted one-on-one interviews about students' sex lives as well as their Columbia experience, a 60-consecutive-day online questionnaire and a survey consisting of hundreds of questions about their sleep, physical activity, mental health, where they get alcohol, eating habits, etc. The SHIFT research team found that women, LGBTQ members and students with higher financial need were more likely to be victims of sexual assault. Additionally, males in fraternities were more likely to be assaulters, but fraternity men were also more vulnerable to sexual assault than other men. From their findings, the SHIFT team says sexual assault awareness can be improved by creating minute structural changes to student life with the focus of changing how students interact with one another. In this way, SHIFT encourages college administrations to consider how students engage and are influenced by their environment to approach sexual assault education. Jennifer Hirsch, a professor at Columbia and a leading voice in SHIFT, compared SHIFT's suggested approach with anti-drunken driving campaigns. Forty years ago, 60 percent of automobile deaths were caused by drunken drivers. Since then, the number of deaths has been cut in half thanks to

multilevel strategies toward institutional and societal change. Columbia University, however, has received complaints of violating Title IX. The university has also been taken to court and even received a hundred page federal complaint filed by 23 students and faculty members against the institution regarding its response to sexual assault. Thus, some students say that Columbia University spent \$2.2 million for good press and to research an issue that could have been solved just by convicting alleged assaulters.

Kamenetz, A. (2017, December 6). A tech-based tool to address campus sexual assault. *NPR*.

Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/yddm9zcv>.

This article highlights Pomona graduate Jessica Ladd who was sexually assaulted as a student. She recalled the reporting process to be more distressing than the actual assault and ultimately found the investigation to be ineffective as she did not receive the results she wanted. Several years after graduation, Ladd came up with a potential solution, or at least an alternative option, to underreported sexual assault. She calls it Callisto, a secure online tool where survivors can write a private account of what happened. In this way, survivors can immediately record what happened during the assault in order to remember the details of the event if they choose to report it later. This is an effective tool because, as Ladd states, sexual assault reports on campus are reported on average 11 months after the fact. From there, students can save their written account of what they experienced, send it to their campus' Title IX coordinator to file a formal report or save the document to their computer and take it to law enforcement. Another feature titled "matching" allows survivors to name their assaulter. Then, if someone else reported the same person, the survivors are connected and campus authorities are notified. Inspired by the #MeToo movement, Ladd recognizes that it is empowering for a survivor to know he or she is not alone, which can encourage the student to speak out against the assaulter. According to Ladd, this new tool has doubled sexual assault reports on college campuses. Further, students using Callisto are reporting faster with an average of reporting four months after the alleged sexual assault instead of 11 months. After its launch two and a half years ago, Callisto is serving 149,000 college students across 12 campuses. Further, the accounts that are never reported to authorities still provide valuable information for college campuses.

Richardson, V. (2017, October 16). California governor sides with DeVos on due process in vetoing campus sexual-assault bill. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/yajqhhq4>.

In this article, California Democrat Gov. Jerry Brown vetoed a bill to put Title IX guidance on college sexual assault from the Obama-era into state law. This move was a hot topic since 30 members of California's U.S. congressional delegation had urged him to sign it for what members consider to be vital legislation to reduce assault and gender discrimination on college campuses. When Betsy DeVos revoked the Obama administration's "Dear Colleague" guidance requiring colleges with federal funding to form Title IX courts to keep their funding, a majority of the California legislature wanted to pass a law to maintain Obama-era Title IX guidance. Brown, however, agrees with DeVos that the standard of proof for sexual assault allegations needs to be raised. Brown's choice to veto the law blocking DeVos' proposal stems from his belief that removing a student accused of sexual assault from educational opportunities should not be taken lightly or worse, be influenced by a college's concern for losing funding. As such, Brown says the presumption of the accuser's innocence can be dangerous because a falsely accused student could risk expulsion. Brown also noted that he has also made legislative moves to protect victims' rights as well. In fact, he signed the country's first state affirmative consent law requiring state universities to oblige students to accept only affirmative consent before engaging in sexual activity. Brown admits there is more research to be done to see how many cases result in expulsion and whether racial disparities are a factor in conviction. Up to this point, no other states have moved to maintain Title IX civil rights protection in state law.

Potter, S. J. (2016). Reducing sexual assault on campus: Lessons from the movement to prevent drunken driving. *American Journal of Public Health, 106*(5), 822-829. Retrieved from EbscoHost Academic Search Premiere.

Sharyn J. Potter's article compares efforts on college campuses to reduce sexual assault with 1980s public health campaigns to prevent drunken driving. Potter stresses that it is important to focus on sexual assault happening on college campuses not just because of the Obama administration's legislative mandates requiring colleges to respond. Potter also stresses the importance of college interventions because a large percentage of drunken driving fatalities are from a similarly aged portion of the population. Potter cited the 2013 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration report that stated that 50 percent of drivers involved in fatal drunken driving crashes were 16 to 24 years old. Further, Potter says that college is an important time for students to develop and explore new ways of thinking. This opportune time presents a chance to effectively encourage new attitudes toward sexual assault prevention. The anti-drunken driving movement was successful because it reshaped cultural norms and drastically lowered numbers of fatalities due to drunken driving from 60 percent in the mid-1970s to 31 percent in 2012. Potter suggests that public health administrations would also benefit from adopting the 1980s model to prevent drunken driving. The source of this achievement in reducing drunken driving is credited to the movement's approach at all five levels of the social-ecological model: individual, relational, community, institution and societal. On the individual level, the public was educated about the ramifications of individual decisions of driving drunk or not stopping a friend from driving drunk. Thus, in terms of sexual assault, Potter suggests informing the public about the consequences of offenders' actions. At the relational level, media campaigns and alcohol intervention training encouraged people to prevent drunk friends from driving. Similarly, the

bystander intervention also applies to sexual assault. At the community level, buildings and roads were equipped to prevent drunken driving and educational sessions provided by organizations were implemented in high schools. These community efforts in turn pushed for institutional change as a form of pressure from grassroots organizations for a legislative crackdown on drunken driving. Lastly, the anti-drunken driving movement helped create societal change by encouraging the public to have little tolerance for drunken drivers. As such, community, institutional and societal pressures can create change to prevent sexual assault as well.

Worthen, M.G. F., & Wallace, S. A. (2017). Intersectionality and perceptions about sexual assault education and reporting on college campuses. *Family Relations*, 66(1), 180-196. Retrieved from Wiley Online Library.

This article is based on a study that utilizes an intersectional feminist framework to observe how students' personal identities affect their views of sexual assault on campus. The authors, Meredith G. F. Worthen and Samantha A. Wallace, conducted a survey of 1,899 students attending a large Southern university. The survey questions include how the students perceive the concern of sexual assault on campus, how they view filing a sexual assault report with campus officials and what they think about a campus-wide sexual assault information session. The findings of this study assert that less privileged populations including LGBTQ members, women and students of color found sexual assault education to be a more serious issue and that their college is in need of better sexual assault training. On the contrary, straight males were less knowledgeable about sexual assault, but also less likely to find a need for better sexual assault education. Worthen and Wallace also note that black women and homosexual women are at higher risk of becoming victims of sexual assault than other races and sexual identities. The survey results also noted that some male students felt "villainized" or "patronized" by the interview questions because they assumed they were presumed as likely perpetrators of sexual assault. Since students perceive discussions of sexual assault differently based on their sex, race, Greek life affiliation or sexual identity, Worthen and Wallace suggest that their findings implicate the need to diversify campus sexual assault education programs to meet the needs of specific audiences to be more effective.