MUTED GROUPS AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE: THE WEB OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

AND SOCIAL MEDIA

By

April Paul Baer

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the College of Education, have examined and

approved this dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree

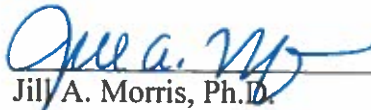of Doctor of Education.

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On Saturday, February 4, 2017, my beloved baby brother James Douglas Paul left this Earth. I am honestly still unable to articulate what a loss this is or imagine life without my beloved "Jamie." As I worked with family members to go through his belongings, I found my master's thesis from 2008 tucked away in one of his dresser drawers. I was told, "he had no idea what this text really was, but he knew you made it. He loved this because it was yours." My baby brother was a silly and loving light in this world and I will forever seek him. Baby brother, here is a second text to love. This is dedicated to you.

I am sincerely appreciative of my parents, Doug and Joy Paul, for providing the support and encouragement necessary to seek out answers to all life's questions. Thank you to my sisters and my extended family for your encouragement. Thank you to my Chair and committee members for your patience, wisdom, and incredible senses of humor along this educational endeavor. Above all else, thank you to my devoted and incredible husband Douglas J. Baer for believing in me when it was hard to believe in myself. And, for all feminists, here and evermore.

Abstract

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Formative research cite nearly 20% of women and 6% of men will experience attempted

or completed sexual assault while enrolled in college (Ali, 2011; Koss, 1988/1989;

Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, & Martin, 2007). Largely, narratives of college sexual

violence are hidden, as reports to college administrators and law enforcement agencies

are low and stigma surrounding such crimes often place fault upon survivors (Carrington

Wooten & Mitchell, 2016; Fisher, Diagle, & Cullen, 2010). However, stories of college

sexual violence have become trending topics via social media outlets (Gringberg, 2014;

Kingkade, 2013; Rennison & Addington, 2014). This research study investigates the use

of social media by sexual violence survivors. Through rhetorical analysis, public tweets

associated with #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe are

analyzed. Data reveal that Millennial college students, referred to as digital natives, use

social media to raise awareness and promote hashtivism, shorthand for "online activism"

(Blay, 2016; Burkhalter, n.d.; Dookhoo, 2015). However, while seeking to challenge rape

culture, these narratives are also open to public speculation and criticism, by lay persons,

media outlets, and internet trolls (Phillips, 2015). Hashtivism through computer-mediated

communication (CMC) allows survivors to forge communities, provide support, and

share strategies as to how to file federal formal complaints while also navigating public

shaming, online harassment, and doxxing (Blay, 2016; Boux & Daum, 2015; Boyd, 2008;

Dookhoo, 2015; Java, Song, Finin, Tseng, 2009; Parkin, 2016; Ziering & Dick, 2015; Walther, 2011).

Keywords: sexual violence, college rape, social media, hashtag, hashtivism

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

The incidence and impact of sexual violence in higher education can be hard to quantify. Reporting rates are arguably low and stigma surrounding victimization is reflective of a dominant culture that promotes rape myths and stereotypes (Carrington Wooten & Mitchell, 2016; Fisher, Daigle, & Cullen, 2010). However, the power of the individual narrative bravely shared by survivors has emerged to provide context and clarity regarding the life-altering effect of sexual violence.

I didn't know really what I was supposed to do. I tweeted, "Someone help me." My friend responded and she was, like, "Well, tell me what happened." We decided that we needed to call the police…

I went back [to school] at the end of January. It was my first class on Tuesday. And I see him walk into the class. I knew. I was, like, "That's him!" They were about to take attendance and that's when I knew I needed to stay calm and just kind of wait it out. He was one of the very last names that they called…

I notified Investigator Angulo who it was. I think at that point [the investigator] knew that [my rapist] was going to be the big football star. He said, "This is a huge football town. You really should think long and hard about whether you want to press charges or not." It didn't make sense to me, really. I, I just thought like, "That's his job. Why isn't he, why isn't he going to do it?"

Our football team kept winning games. We were going to play in the national championship. All these people were praising him. People were just calling me names; a slut, a whore. I got a tweet from a girl who I didn't know. The tweet was like, 'Why would you blame such a good guy for doing this?'

People were threatening me, my family. And there was [sic] other people that

were threatening my sorority, saying, "We're going to burn down their house."

I kinda just want to know, like, "Why me?" Doesn't really make sense. I

know it was the right thing to do to come forward. But, Investigator Anguelo was

right when he said that I'd be driven out of Tallahassee." (Ziering & Dick, 2015,

1:16:17)

Statement of the Problem

Research reveal that women aged 16 to 24 years experience the highest rates of

intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and stalking (Black et al., 2011). The National

Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) of 2010 found that nearly 80% of

self-identified female rape survivors were victimized before age 25 with more than 27%

of male survivors experiencing rape before age 10 (Black et al., 2011). However,

research also highlight that women enrolled in college experience rates higher than that

of women not enrolled (Baum, Catalano, Rand, & Rose, 2009; Fisher, Cullen, & Turner,

2000; Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, & Martin, 2007). Though triangulated research

cite the lifetime incidence of sexual violence to be one in five women and one in seventy-

one men, the first research study analyzing the incidence of rape in college found

victimization rates 10 to 15 times that of the national average (Fisher et al., 2010; Koss,

1988/1989; White House Council on Women and Girls, 2014). Some researchers

speculate "rape is more common than any other crime perpetrated in institutions of higher

education" (Schiffman, 2010, p. 5).

For years, research of sexual violence has evaluated the phenomena of survivors

not reporting their assaults to college administrators or law enforcement officers for

redress. Research cite the traumatic nature of seeking assistance from law enforcement and medical professionals, including the recollection of intimate details and the invasive nature of forensic medical examinations (Langton, Berzofsky, & Smiley-McDonald, 2012; Sable, Danis, Mauzy, & Gallagher, 2006). Survivors share concerns regarding how confidentially their reports will be held by administrators and officials and to what extent their experience will be believed (Sable et al., 2006). Assaults involving the use of alcohol or other drugs are less likely to be reported, though they are estimated to be used within 90% of college rapes, as are assaults in which the survivor is of a minority group (Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, & Martin, 2009; Langton et al., 2012; White & Hingson, 2014; Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011).

Other research find that though the act of reporting can be incredibly intimidating, that reporting is inhibited based on a disassociation from one's experience of sexual violence being a crime (Fisher et al., 2000). Fisher et al. (2000) argue that the word "rape" is value-laden, causing a disconnect within survivors in being unable to associate their experiences with the term, causing delays in seeking support (Fisher et al., 2000). Additional research reveal that the proliferation of rape myths and cultural insensitivities, termed "rape culture," associated with sexual violence also have a chilling effect upon reporting (Carrington Wooten & Mitchell, 2016; Rentschler, 2014). Rape culture is defined as the cultural norms and practices through which sexual violence is produced, justified, minimized, silenced, and/or ignored (Rentschler, 2014). According to the American College Health Association (2007), rates of sexual violence coupled with systemic acceptance of rape myths via rape culture can foster a college environment in which survivors are further disempowered – not just by their assailant, but by a culture

that finds fault in survivors for bringing about their own trauma.

However, trending topics over the past several years show that conversations regarding sexual assault in college are increasing (Grinberg, 2014; Kingkade, 2013; Rennison & Addington, 2014). Allegations of sexual violence at campuses including Florida State University, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, University of Virginia, Columbia University and others are no longer being silenced, but are now a part of a national dialogue (Anderson, 2014b; Grinberg, 2014; Kingkade, 2013). Sexual assault survivors are mobilizing via computer-mediated communication (CMC), forging communities, sharing narratives regarding their assaults, and learning how to file federal formal complaints against their institutions (Kingkade, 2013; Pérez-Peña, 2013; Rentschler, 2014; Walther, 2014).

Purpose and Rationale of the Study

Social media provide users with a platform through which personal accounts and experiences can be exchanged through a first-person narrative and shared with a global network (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014). Survivors of sexual violence are going online to hold those who contribute to rape culture accountable (Rentschler, 2014; Suran, 2014). In speaking out against sexual violence online, "The Internet has transformed victims into survivors and survivors into activists" (Suran, 2014, p.10).

Since 2011, a series of advancements in regards to sexual violence within higher education have been made at the federal level. For example, the experiences of survivors Andrea Pino and Annie Clark, alumnae of the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, highlight the utility of social media in their survivorship (Clark & Pino, 2016; Ziering & Dick, 2015). The pair connected with dozens of their peers online after co-

authoring a federal complaint against their university for the mishandling of their reports of sexual violence. Pino and Clark later formed the non-profit End Rape on Campus to continue their work to support survivors nationwide (Clark & Pino, 2016; Kingkade, 2013; Pérez-Peña, 2013). Through their work to find resources and support, Pino and Clark connect to college students and survivors directly via social media, seeking means through which their trauma can be used to mobilize a national movement (Ziering & Dick, 2015). This narrative is but one of many in the last several years featuring the public work of survivors to counter rape culture and challenge legal and administrative systems.

This research study seeks to explore the utility of social media as a platform through which social justice topics can be shared, illuminating the plight of sexual violence survivors. Specifically, I will review the phenomena of survivors publicly identifying themselves and connecting with others online to further the narrative regarding sexual violence in higher education. I will quantitatively review the activity of three hashtags associated with college rape, including their lifespan and participation, while also qualitatively assessing emerging themes. This research will show the value of social media as a place to amplify marginalized voices, in spite of the threat of victim blaming and public shaming often associated with internet platforms.

Significance of Study

Sexual assault survivors are often silenced by their trauma. The physical act of sexual assault can coercively and/or violently silence an individual, ignoring their autonomous rights to their person (Brownmiller, 1975). In the aftermath of an assault, survivors struggle to articulate their experience or find their experiences minimized

through acceptance of rape myths and victim blaming (Burnett et al., 2009). Traditionally, sexual violence is a taboo topic in which survivors refrain from reporting their experience to those with whom the survivor has a close, personal relationship (Fisher et al., 2000). However, CMC appears to be providing a very public space through which students share their trauma.

The current research study seeks to investigate a perceived increase in public conversation regarding sexual violence in higher education; specifically, I wish to evaluate how the rhetoric of survivors via online channels contributes to the increase in the topic's attention. In this work, I will investigate three hashtags associated with sexual violence in higher education. Hashtags, as defined by Rightler-McDaniels and Hendrickson (2014), are social media postings containing a linguistic marker (#) through which paralleling messages are traceable. This research study will explore #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe. Each hashtag provides a space through which dialogue regarding sexual violence, survivorship, and related experiences can be shared via CMC. More research must be done to evaluate the affect CMC and social media have upon advancing the topic of sexual violence within 21st century higher education and its impact upon reporting rates, allocation of resources, and countering victim-blaming and rape culture.

Theoretical Framework

This research study expands upon theoretical concepts and frameworks in which issues of power are centrally analyzed as sexual violence is inherently a crime of power imbalance facilitated through sexual means (Brownmiller, 1975; Henry & Powell, 2014). Psychopolitical validity describes the processes through which marginalized groups seek

liberation through collective action (Prilleltensky, 2003). Further illuminating power imbalance, feminist communication theory discusses the ways in which the female experience can be ignored through paternalistic cultural and organizational means (Conroy, 2013; Henry & Powell, 2014). Muted group theory describes the power imbalance experienced by marginalized groups when attempting to communicate their experiences utilizing language created by dominant cultural groups (Kramarae, 1981). The medium through which these communicative elements will be examined requires awareness of concepts associated with CMC (Page, 2012; Walther, 2011).

Research Design Overview

This study uses an inductive qualitative design, as delineated by Creswell (1994), to analyze social media text. Reoccurring terms and themes are identified through which the data will be inductively analyzed to further document common social phenomena associated with the sharing of survivorship online. The data is also quantitatively analyzed to determine the lifespan of narratives, including the breadth and depth of each selected narrative and the longevity of the conversation. I am seeking to document the experiences of sexual violence survivors as shard publicly online. Further, I will identify themes through deductive coding, as described by Creswell (1994), using the theoretical and conceptual frameworks described within this research study.

Social media are a genre of media formulated for the individual and often public use of individuals, sharing first-hand accounts and narratives regarding the human experience (Rentschler, 2014). Research identify social media as providing an accessible and affective technological platform through which social justice issues, including sexual violence, are being addressed (Rentschler, 2014). I rhetorically analyzed three narratives

regarding sexual violence in college, #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe. I used NVivo software, as described by Dixon (2014), to help organize and analyze the data. The data was then coded and analyzed into nodes (Dixon, 2014). The data was reviewed in comparison to its primary narrative to determine communicative patterns. Deductive analysis was used to determine the association between identified themes and the theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 1994). Utilizing Rogers (1962) diffusion of innovation, the lifespan of each hashtag is documented, including its genesis, contributing narratives, reactions of online users, and the duration through which the hashtag was used online.

Research Questions

I believe that social media provide an accessible platform for survivors of college sexual assault to share their experiences. Further, I believe the data will reveal survivors are connecting with one another, forming online communities. This forming of online communities provide a safe space for survivors to feel less isolated in their trauma, lessening perceived taboos associated with being a sexual assault survivor (Rentschler, 2014). This research seeks to collect evidence regarding the utility of social media for sexual violence survivors, analyzing the rhetorical value of social media postings to further a cultural dialogue regarding the topic.

Assumptions

This study uses a descriptive, inductive qualitative design to unearth patterns of behavior and communication regarding sexual violence and social media using three specific hashtags. It is assumed that the posts associated with these three cases parallel the intentions behind their associated hashtags, giving voice to a taboo and silenced topic.

It is further assumed that survivors of college sexual violence, not unlike their peers, seek out communities online through which collective experiences can be shared. This study also uses deductive analysis to determine commonalities amongst the three hashtags with the assumption that there are paralleling linguistic markers within them.

Limitations

Creswell (1994) discusses the limitations of qualitative research, specifically in its inability to speak to a wider, more generalizable human experience. However, the data will be able to provide rich descriptions regarding three social phenomena regarding college sexual violence. This study benefits from the use of a mixed methodological approach by charting the beginning of each text, conversational reach, and timeline of three specific hashtags. In this work, a broader context to each narrative and its abilities to illicit several shared personal experiences will be analyzed.

As a higher education professional working to mitigate gender-based harassment and violence, I am aware of the damaging and complex nature of sexual violence upon college students. In sensing patterns of behavior of survivors utilizing tools through which they can better cope, this research study seeks to document the experiences of contributors to three specific cases as told from their first-person perspective. As a practitioner, my training seeks to create an environment through which reporting of sexual violence is encouraged and its occurrence prevented through active engagement and education. However, this study seeks to amplify a tool assumed to provide support to survivors. It is through the mixed methodological design of this research that I can better understand the utility of social media for sexual violence survivors.

This research study discusses topics of a highly sensitive nature. Therefore, the

data selected will be publicly accessible via Twitter. As a result of Twitter users' abilities to contribute to timely discussions of social justice while being able to protect aspects of their identity, if not their full identity, no other social media platforms, applications, and/or websites are reviewed as an ethical protection to those studied. Further, no identifying information of laypersons contributing to these online discussions, including username, will be shared; however, should public figures (e.g. politicians, activists, and/or celebrities) contribute to these online narratives, they will be identified for purposes of discussing the implications of their comments. Though Rentschler (2014) documents that other social media platforms are more widely adopted by adults online, it is important to ensure that the data collected are contributed by users that feel more comfortable in sharing their experiences in association with their online identities.

Many public narratives regarding sexual violence in higher education feature the accounts of white, female, heterosexual students attending elite institutions of higher learning (Clark & Pino, 2016). The dominance of this narrative is limiting in that it does not feature the experiences of students of color, lower-socioeconomic means, attending a variety of institutions nationwide. This lack of diversity incorrectly associates sexual assault in college with a heteronormative, racially-biased, affluent lens. However, as addressed by survivors Clark and Pino (2016), being of a marginalized group (i.e. genderqueer) can further inhibit a survivor's ability to share their experience to a public audience. Two experiences highlighted in this research feature female students assaulted by men at top-tier universities, Columbia University and the University of Virginia. Only one of the three social narratives regarding sexual violence in higher education will more broadly represent a range of experiences as it is not associated with any one report of

college rape, #SurvivingCostMe.

Finally, it is also important to note that all contributing voices in association with #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe are not in support of their values or efforts. In fact, some users providing commentary to these hashtags actively seek to discredit these social media movements. Trolls, online users who seek to harass and/or bully others for enjoyment, have an equal opportunity to be sampled just as those who self-identify as survivors (Phillips, 2015). Further, those who seek to counter arguments associated with the three identified movements may also be included in the sample. Therefore, I will use NVivo to highlight most commonly referenced phrases, terms, and linguistic markers associated with each case to determine the ability of the hashtag to mobilize a counter rape-culture movement.

Delimitations

This study will analyze hashtags popularized in 2014 to document their lifecycle. These cases allow me to investigate the catalyst for the hashtag in association with its original narrative, and what, if any, other external or internal forces impacted the flow of conversation thereafter. The three cases are selected purposefully based upon their ability to be tracked en masse online and due to their presence being documented in news media. Though other narratives of sexual violence online may be widely known via social and news media (i.e. the allegations of rape against Heisman trophy winner Jameis Winston), only those narratives through which a grassroots, common linguistic marker will be textually analyzed (Ziering & Dick, 2015).

Definitions

Sexual Violence. Sexual violence, as defined by the World Health Organization

(WHO) (2016), refers to "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting" (para. 3). Sexual violence includes rape, defined as the forcible or coerced penetration of another person against another (WHO, 2016). WHO (2016) describes sexual violence as a "major health problem" affecting more than one-in-three women worldwide (para. 3). The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) defines sexual violence similarly, highlighting the use of force or one's inability to provide consent as central to such acts. OCR defines sexual violence as "physical sexual acts perpetrated against a person's will or where a person is incapable of giving consent" (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014a, p. 1). Acts including rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual battery, sexual abuse, and sexual coercion fall within the scope of sexual violence (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014a). I will be utilizing the term "sexual violence" as the umbrella term referring to the aforementioned acts as described by OCR (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014a).

      Sexual Assault and Rape. WHO (2016) defines sexual assault as the use of force, physical or otherwise, to sexually penetrate another person. Further, WHO delineates that sexual assault is a facet of sexual violence. WHO (2016) specifies that rape is a subset of sexual assault, referring to the forced act of penetration. "Rape" is typically a legal term bound by uniform codes of policing and/or mandates of any given country (2016). Within the US, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (2014) definition is widely adopted, "penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without consent of the

victim" (p. 1).

It is important to note that the attempt of such an act is still referred to as an act of sexual violence. For purposes of this research, I will be utilizing the term sexual assault in reference to the attempt of any sexual act of force or coercion upon another person without consent. I will use the term "rape" in reference to the crime committed to which one may be legally charged and prosecuted. However, it is important to note authors, researchers, experts, and survivors often use these terms interchangeably.

Sexual Coercion. The NISVS defines sexual coercion as the use of nonphysical force in acts of sexual violence (Black et al., 2011). Coercion includes the threat of physical or social harm, verbal pressure, harassment, deception, persistence, blackmail, and/or the use of another's mental or physical helplessness as a result of their age or capacity used by the perpetrator in order to have sexual contact with another person, regardless of consent (Fisher et al., 2010; Marston, 2005). Researchers argue that a continuum of coercion exists, ranging from psychological pressure to the use of physical force, to which a perpetrator seeks to have sexual contact with a victim (Fisher et al., 2010). Sexual violence perpetrated by acts of coercion outside of physical force are estimated to be most prevalent in the facilitation of sexual violence in college (Fisher et al., 2010).

Social Media. Social media sites are networked online platforms that allow users to create and articulate public or semi-public identities and commentary (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014). Though varied in the means by which users are able to interact, the central premise of social media is to provide a collective space through which communication occurs (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014). Social media

platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and dozens of other popularly accessed spaces through which a user's interactions contribute to an e-community (Page, 2012).

Organization of the Study

This study employs a mixed methodological approach to understand the use of social media by sexual violence survivors. In this work, I will quantitatively document the lifespan of each hashtag. Popular postings are documented along with major contributors, common phrases, along with any significant dates or events in association with the hashtag. I also rhetorically analyzed social media text through descriptive and inductive means by allowing the thematic elements of text to be identified through an open-coding process. The codes are then analyzed deductively by operationalizing the theoretical concepts of Psychopolitical Validity Theory, Feminist Communication Theory, and Muted Group Theory. By examining three cases of social media trending topics associated with college sexual assault, I seek to provide context to this research by discussing the phenomena of sexual violence in higher education and that of sexual violence survivors connecting via virtual spaces. These topics are analyzed rhetorically for their communicative value – reviewing common themes in association with each unique case. After thorough analysis, an argument is made regarding the utility of each hashtag and social media in providing spaces through which marginalized groups can seek to amplify once silenced conversations.

Chapter 2 – Review of Literature

This review of the literature provides foundational information regarding the incidence of sexual violence in higher education. Federal oversight and mandates are summarized to highlight the legal obligations university campuses have to prevent and respond to reports of sexual violence. The review provides details as to the accessibility of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) along with theoretical frameworks guiding this research study – Psychopolitical Validity Theory, Feminist Communication Theory, and Muted Group Theory.

Sexual Assault in Higher Education

Formative research cite nearly 20% of women and 6% of men will experience attempted or completed sexual assault while enrolled in college (Ali, 2011; Koss, 1989; Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, & Martin, 2007). Female students are four-times more likely to experience sexual violence than any other demographic of women, regardless of age and educational level (Campus Sexual Assault, 2013; Schiffman, 2010). It is estimated that nearly one in every 30 female first-year students will experience sexual violence before their first midterm examination (EverFi, 2015). Female students who experience sexual assault during their first semester earned lower grade point averages at the end of that term than female students who had not experienced sexual assault (EverFi, 2015). Jordan, Combs, and Smith (2014) found a significant correlation between poor academic performance and the severity of a student's victimization while in college. In a position statement in 2007, the American College Health Association state that sexual violence presents a significant barrier to academic success, citing lower graduation rates and persistence of physical and mental health illness. Further, research indicate that

survivors of sexual violence are more likely to experience alcohol and other drug dependence, major depressive syndrome, and post-traumatic stress disorders (Ali, 2011; Gidycz, Orchowski, King, & Rich, 2008; Mouilso, Fischer, & Calhoun, 2012; Ullman & Breckin, 2003; Ullman, Karabatsos, & Koss, 1999).

Research conducted by the American Association of Universities of more than 150,000 college students found that 11.7% of participants experienced some form of sexual violence while in college (Cantor et al., 2015). A recent Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation survey of more than 1,000 current and former undergraduate students found that 44% of female participants and 33% of male participants perceive sexual assault as a "big problem" or as "somewhat of a problem" at their institutions (Anderson & Clement, 2015).

The American College Health Association (2007) warns that rates of victimization coupled with campus environments rampant with the proliferation of rape myth acceptance, leads survivors to feel disempowered. Further, such violence counters the educational missions of colleges and universities as students cannot achieve scholastic success where they do not feel safe, valued, or supported (American College Health Association, 2007). However, the 2015 Inside Higher Ed Survey of College and University Presidents found 78% of institutional leaders disagreed or strongly disagreed that sexual assault was prevalent on their campuses (Jaschik & Lederman, 2015).

Reporting. Unlike other violent crimes, rape and sexual violence are less likely to be reported to law enforcement with reporting estimates ranging from 5% to 20% (Langton, Berzofsky, & Smiley-McDonald, 2012; Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011). In a 2000 study of sexual violence, researchers found that of participants who had

experienced sexual violence in college, less than 5% reported the incident to law enforcement (Fisher et al., 2000). When asked why their assaults were not reported, participants indicated experiencing shame and feeling responsible for the attack (Fisher et al., 2000). It is also important to note that upwards of one-third of participants who had experienced sexual assault shared that they did not tell anyone about their trauma – not a friend, not a family member, no one (Fisher et al., 2000).

The 2011 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey found that the lifetime prevalence rate of rape is nearly 20% for women and nearly 2% for men (Breiding et al., 2014). In a 2011 study of 2000 undergraduate women, 230 students experienced sexual assault with 27 (11.5%) reporting these crimes to law enforcement officials, reporting rates below that of non-students (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011). The U.S. Department of Justice found that upwards of 65% of sexually violent crimes were not reported to police with "fear of reprisal" being a commonly cited reason for a lack of reporting generally, whereas reporting in the university setting is estimated to be lower than that of a general population (Langton et al., 2012; U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, 2006). Further research reveal that 90% of assailants are known to the survivor, an element which may contribute to low reporting figures (Campus Sexual Assault, 2013; Fisher et al., 2000; Fisher et al., 2010; Keehan, 2011; Sable et al., 2006; Ullman, Karabatsos, & Koss, 1999; White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014). Sexual assaults involving alcohol and other drugs (upwards of 82% of assaults) are less likely to be reported as survivors are often unable to provide detailed accounts as a result of their intoxication or incapacitation as well as being concerned of punitive action as a result of their own alcohol or other drug consumption

(White & Hinson, 2014; Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011). Survivors of sexual violence are likely to experience depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and thoughts of suicide – these struggles are compounded for students enrolled in higher education (Ali, 2011; Mouilso et al., 2012).

For institutions of higher learning, rape and sexual violence often present critical issues for student wellbeing, retention, and the preservation of a campus' welfare and reputation (Gray, 2014; Lisak, 2004; Schiffman, 2010). However, as research also indicate, to address the issue of sexual violence within higher education, campuses must create an atmosphere that supports reporting. Paradoxically then, the first indication that an institution is courageously moving to end sexual violence is almost inevitably an increase in the official tally of that violence. This is not the kind of publicity that most college administrators strive to create (Lisak, 2004, p. 20). For example, University of Montana was dubbed "America's rape capital" after more than 80 rapes were reported within a 36-month period – a reporting rate much lower than what a campus of 15,000 should expect (Gray, 2014). Researcher David Lisak (2004) argues that the proliferation of sexual violence within higher education will persist until institutions are willing to risk bad press in the face of active prevention and reporting.

Federal Legislation. Federal civil rights laws seek to eliminate discriminatory barriers to education within the United States (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 1999). Of these civil rights laws, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) prohibits sex and gender-based discrimination of students within institutions, educational programs, or related activities that received federal financial assistance (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2015b; 2015c). Under

Title IX, campuses are responsible for facilitating an environment in which all students have equitable access to educational benefits without hindrance. As stated by Office for Civil Rights (OCR), the investigative and enforcement arm of the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) (2012), schools are in violation of Title IX, should it be found that a hostile environment is created or maintained in which students are limited or denied participation or benefit from education programs on the basis of sex. Further, a campus is in violation should it fail to take prompt and reasonable steps to address sexual violence, eliminate the conditions found to promote a hostile environment, and mitigate the circumstances in which students were denied educational benefit when a campus is aware or should have been aware that sexual violence has occurred (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014a). If found in violation, an institution is subject to financial penalties and other relevant sanctions, including loss of the ability to award federal financial student aid (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014a).

Gender-based discrimination of students includes sexual harassment and sexual violence (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2015b). Sexual violence refers to "physical sexual acts perpetrated against a person's will or where a person is incapable of giving consent" (U.S. Department of Education, 2014a, p. 1). Acts including rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and sexual coercion fall within the scope of sexual violence (U.S. Department of Education, 2014a). Title IX seeks to protect students from sexual violence or harassment regardless of where the alleged offense occurs. Further, Title IX is applicable should a university employee or student be alleged to have

committed an act of sexual violence, even if the survivor is not affiliated with the institution (i.e. visitor) (Walsh, 2014).

Institutions of higher education use student misconduct proceedings as established through their respective student codes of conduct to address reports of sexual violence (Bohmer & Parrot, 1993). In this work, trained university administrators hold hearings where complaints are formally reviewed and violations of policy may be addressed through educational sanctions (Bohmer & Parrot, 1993). These proceeding parallel civil proceedings in those parties are afforded due process to address and respond to allegations of misconduct (Bohmer & Parrot, 1993). However, unlike civil or criminal proceedings, universities are reviewing potential violations of university policy, not of the law (Bohmer & Parrot, 1993). This important distinction is critical in that institutions are only able to recommend and enforce sanctions that are within their scope; specifically, college and universities are able to apply sanctions within their educational context. According to the Association for Student Conduct Administration (2014), the national professional association for student conduct professionals, "the ultimate goals of student conduct processes are student growth and development and the preservation of the educational environment" (para. 2). The most punitive sanction possible for a student found responsible for violating a school's code of conduct is the removal of a student through expulsion or suspension (Bohmer & Parrot, 1993). However, research of campus policies found institutional policies to be incomplete in as many as 75% of campus policies reviewed (e.g. lacking contact information, not providing details as to how to file a report with law enforcement); university policies are only effective if they are

accessible, well defined, and congruent with state and federal mandates (DeMattero, Galloway, Arnold, & Patel, 2015).

In April 2011, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Russlynn Ali published a document commonly referred to as the Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) to underscore the responsibilities of institutions of higher learning to respond to instance of sexual violence per Title IX. This document sought to provide additional guidance and insight regarding the complexities of investigating and adjudicating cases of sexual misconduct, including establishing a national evidentiary standard of preponderance (Ali, 2011). The DCL also illuminated corresponding federal mandates including the Higher Education Act of 1965, known as the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act of 1990 (Clery Act) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (Ali, 2011).

Paralleling legislation in support of Title IX includes the Clery Act and the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, and its reauthorization in 2013 (VAWA) (American Council on Education, 2013; Clery Center, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The Clery Act requires all institutions of higher education that receive federal aid to publicly report crimes that occur on campus, in public areas immediately adjacent to campus, or in-campus operated facilitates (i.e. Greek housing) (Clery Center, 2012). Crimes that require reporting fall within seven core areas: criminal homicide, sexual offenses, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson (Clery Center, 2012). VAWA's reauthorization in 2013 further defined the obligations of colleges and universities regarding annual crime reporting, procedures for student conduct proceedings, and in the adoptions of policies and practices to better educate the

campus community on sexual violence (American Council on Education, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Campuses, therefore, are required to expand the reporting of crime statistics to further shed light on incidents of reported sexual violence. Incidences of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking are to be delineated and included in the annual crime statistics reports of each campus as required by the Clery Act (American Council on Education, 2013; Mahaffie, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). VAWA also prescribed that an evidentiary standard of preponderance be utilized in campus judicial proceedings involving sexual misconduct (American Council on Education, 2013). Finally, the 2013 reauthorization of VAWA required all new students and employees be provided education and training to better prevent and address sexual violence (American Council on Education, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Combined, Title IX, Clery, and VAWA seek to instill a sense of institutional responsibility in the prevention of and response to campus sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and other forms of gender-based harassment and violence.

Research indicate that incidence of sexual violence are most often committed by serial perpetrators, around 6-8% of men (Abbey and McAuslan, 2004; Lisak, 2004). Lisak and Miller (2002) found that in a study of 1882 men, 76 repeat rapists accounted for 439 assaults, averaging 5.8 attacks each. Of serial perpetrators, research finds that forced sexual contact was used to facilitate 75% of rapes and verbal sexual coercion was used in 64% of rapes (Abbey and McAuslan, 2004). The rates of serial perpetration are often cited to challenge campus adjudicators who seek to use educational sanctions when

addressing sexual violence as fewer than one-third of students found responsible for sexual misconduct are expelled (Kingkade, 2014a; Lombardi, 2010).

Data maintained by the U.S. Justice Department's Office on Violence Against Women states that one-tenth to one-quarter of students found responsible for sexual misconduct in on-campus judicial proceedings faced expulsion (Lombardi, 2010). Lombardi's (2010) article follows Margaux, a student at Indiana University who sought out the campus' conduct process to manage her complaint of sexual violence against another student. Though her assailant was found responsible for "sexual contact" without consent, Margaux was enraged when the accused student was suspended for a summer semester he was not likely to enroll in anyway. "Administrators believe the sanctions commonly issued in the college judicial system provide a thoughtful and effective way to hold culpable students accountable, but survivors and advocates say the punishment rarely fits the crime" (Lombardi, 2010, para. 5). Margaux would later withdraw from Indiana University based upon the campus' management of her case and her fears of seeing her perpetrator on campus (Lombardi, 2010).

Research prompted by U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill of Missouri found that out of 440 participating four-year colleges and universities, more than 40% of public and 81% of private campuses had not conducted a sexual assault investigation within the past five years (U.S. Senate, 2014). A 2009 report examining Clery data found that 77% of the more than 3,000 reporting campuses reported zero sexual offenses with an additional 501 campuses reporting between one or two assaults (Quigley, 2013). Of concern are the widely accepted rates of incidence for sexual violence within higher education citing that one-in-five female students will experience sexual violence while in college (Koss,

1988/1989). Under Title IX, campuses are obligated to investigate complaints of sexual violence; a lack of investigations does not equate to a lack of sexual violence within a campus community but rather a campus climate that inhibits reporting (Quigley 2013; U.S. Senate, 2014).

As of January 30, 2017, 225 college and university campuses are under investigation by OCR for alleged Title IX violations (CS Staff, 2017). Though the named institutions and OCR are unable to respond to specific questions or concerns raised as a result of their respective open investigations, OCR shared that investigations were to determine responsibility for Title IX violations, not confirmations of violations themselves (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014b). Of these campuses, at least 24 have received funds through the US Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women's Grant to Reduce Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence and Stalking on Campus Program, a grant designed to combat sexual violence within campus communities (Vendiuoli, 2014).

Formal complaints to OCR increased more than 78% since between 2008 and 2014 (Anderson, 2014b; Teicher Khadraroo, 2012). More than 7500+ Title IX complaints were received and closed by OCR between January 1, 2002 and September 22, 2014 (Title IX complaints in higher education, 2014). In fiscal year 2014, OCR received 5,845 Title IX complaints, of which sexual or gender harassment or violence included 854 of the complaints and retaliation totaled 652 complaints (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2015a). In fiscal year 2015, OCR received 2,939 Title IX complaints, of which sexual or gender harassment or vilence included 536 complaintss and retaliation totaled 239 complaints (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil

Rights, 2016). Of the original 55 campuses named in May 2014, the longest-standing investigation was with the Ohio State University, where the complaint was authored and the investigation began in June 2010 (Stratford, 2014). This case would end when campus administrators voluntarily agreed to enter into a resolution with OCR – four years of investigation would lead to no formal conclusion (Anderson, 2014a). That year, OCR investigations averaged 1,469 days, meaning a complainant would often graduate before a formal resolution would be reached (Lhamon & Runcie, 2015).

Sharing Survivorship Online

Technological advances in the 21st-century have increased accessibility of mass communication (Downing, 2008). More than half of U.S. adults own a smartphone; these same users report their devices are primarily used to access the Internet and social media (Boux & Daum, 2015). Largely, adolescents and young adults, referred to as digital natives, flock to social media to present aspects of their identities and personalities in addition to interacting with their peers (Boyd, 2008; Boyd and Ellison, 2008; Dookhoo, 2015). Digital natives is a phrase associated with Millennials, based upon their coming of age alongside technological advancements, including social media (Dookhoo, 2015). Social media provide a forum to discuss music and popular culture to debate topics including social justice and human rights (Boyd, 2008; Boyd and Ellison, 2008; Ungbha Korn & Kneese, 2015). Social media's role evolves as additional platforms emerge, permitting ease of access, redefining what it means to be connected (Wheeler, 2013). Nearly three-quarters of online U.S. adults use social media, with more than half actively participating in two or more social media platforms (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015). Nearly 90% of U.S. adults aged 18 to 29 years use social media (Perrin,

2015). As a result of a vast online audience, and research has identified, digitized

conversations online have the capacity to affect social change (Ungbha Korn & Kneese,

2015).

Early research on CMC was skeptical of the interpersonal communicative value

of electronically-mediated discussions in comparison with face-to-face communication

(FTF) (Walther, 1996). Researchers sought to determine the utility of CMC when FTF

was considered the best means of communication, "What is CMC good for and why

would anyone use it at all?" (Walther, 1996). However, Walther (1996) argues that CMC

can surpass the level of interpersonal intimacy established in FTF communication when

the CMC is strictly devoted to social over professional interactions. Online forums took

shape with Yahoo! groups in 1998, and the world's first online social space, Cyworld,

launching in 1999 (Page, 2012). Online websites such as Friendster, established in 2002,

MySpace, established in 2003, and Facebook, established in 2004, would soon follow,

providing users with the ability to share their lives online (Page, 2012). In moving

forward nearly a decade, platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram dominate

online, with a majority of world-wide users accessing these platforms daily (Duggan et

al., 2015). As argued by Downing (2008) social media brings together individuals who

may have otherwise never connected through shared interests and conversation.

Through the dynamics of social media platforms, users can connect to one another

through searchable terms and topics. The amplification of conversations becomes

noteworthy by going "viral" or being a "trending" topic (Zubiaga, Spina, Martínez, &

Fresno, 2015). A student activist at Occidental College shared that social media provided

a platform through which others connected to the narratives of survivorship (Pérez-Peña,

2013). "We really started to get student buy-in when we started our blog, and started using Tumblr, Facebook, and Twitter. Then all of a sudden we were getting messages from other schools, even other countries" (Pérez-Peña, 2013, para. 11). Suran (2014) argues that online social networks have provided a space for sexual assault survivors to share their trauma and mobilize. "The locale for discourse is personal, simultaneously intimate and public" (Wheeler, 2013, p. 2).

However, it is also important to note that social media also provides a means through which anonymous users can engage in deviant behavior. Through an ease of access in instant communication, a research student found that of 3,745 teens who reported being in a dating relationship within the past year, more than 25% reported being in a relationship in which digital dating violence occurred and 10% admitted perpetrating dating abuse online (Zweig, Dank, Yahner, & Lachman, 2013). Online trolling, or targeted harassment, of survivors continues perpetuates victimization without the boundaries of time and space (Fuchs, Kelley, & Lubin, 2013). For example, following the death of Robin Williams in 2014, anonymous social media users targeted his daughter, Zelda, with comments including, "Look at what he did to himself because of you" (Harding, 2015). When a female tech writer appeared too confident in her teaching of coding to her students in 2007, she was unfairly targeted, where social media users posted her address and social security number online encouraging her rape and murder (Harding, 2015). This behavior, referred to as "trolling," highlights that social media provide a platform for any person to state anything, regardless if the comments are harmful or destructive.

Even further, social media can provide a space through which rapists and

bystanders can continue to exploit a survivor. On the night of August 11, 2012, a 16-year-old high school student in Steubenville, Ohio, was repeatedly raped by a group of her peers (Cosslett, 2013; Petrecca, 2013). Throughout the assault, her rapists captured photographs and video – including an image of her incapacitated, lifeless looking body dangling mid-air, being held by two football players by her hands and feet (Cosslett, 2013; Petrecca, 2013). A 12-minute video of the assault was shared widely online and was featured in another video to which an Ohio State University student Michael Nodianos provides commentary (Harding, 2015). Nodianos' commentary included, "She is so raped right now…They raped her harder than that cop raped Marcellus Wallus in *Pulp Fiction*…They raped her quicker than Mike Tyson raped that girl…They raped her more than the Duke lacrosse team" (Harding, 2015, p. 48). Another male off-screen pushes back against Nodianos, stating the video is depicting a vile, criminal act (Harding, 2015). "Dude, this is not cool. They're raping a girl," says the off-screen bystander; to which Nodianos replies, "They're not raping her, 'cause she is dead" (Harding, 2015, p. 49).

This documentation of the assault is forever online, in a space not bound by law, ethics, or time, to which the survivor is unable to escape. However, the documentation proved damning to the perpetrators in the aforementioned case. Referred to as "the case that social media won," the obscene and graphic evidence of August 11, 2012, captured in text messages and images shared on social media were used to convict Trent Mays and Ma'Lik Richmond of rape (Cauchon, Cummings, & Bacon, 2013; Cosslett, 2013, p. 42).

Sharing survivorship online has challenged the myth that sexual assault is committed by "strangers in the bushes" against college co-eds that were scantily clad in

revealing clothing, walking alone at night. Survivor Annie Clark shared that her coming

forward as a survivor helps to humanize sexual assault survivors to the greater public

(Ziering & Dick, 2015). Her accounts of sexual violence provided a space where other

survivors felt more comfortable contributing to the conversation. Before too long, Clark

shared that the faces and stories proved effective in furthering the national dialogue: "We

saw what was effective. And that was personal narrative and putting a face and a name to

the issues" (Ziering & Dick, 2015; 1:32:45).

As the collection of stories grew, the group began to realize the strength in

numbers their narratives had. This experience relates to Prilleltensky's (2003) concept of

wellness, achieved by the satisfying of psychological needs of the individual and group

through empowerment. Cosslett (2013) argues that the Internet, though widely accessible

and public, feels intimate and personal to the individual user. Through the expression of

trauma via social media, survivors were able to satisfy their individual needs for

empowerment while also mobilizing into a socially active force.

As a muted group, sexual assault survivors were unable to confer or assemble as a

larger, more public group (Kramarae, 1981). Often, stories of sexual assault were shared

in intimate settings, amongst friends, if disclosed at all. As Harding (2015) states, "Just as

important as the increased accessibility of organized services is the increased

accessibility of other people who have endured similar experiences" (p. 219-220).

Harding (2015) highlights that finding comfort in the shared survivorship experience

online does not require a student to even leave their bed – resources and support are

accessible online. "You don't need to be in a survivors' group meeting to hear these

stories anymore…The human connections is [sic] the same, but social media lets you do

it on a completely different scale" (Suran, 2014, p. 10). Downing (2008) argues that the utility of social media aids in the diffusion of social movements and promotion of social change, including allowing survivors to mobilize online to bring about positive enhancements to resources and support.

Researcher Kelly Oliver (2001) refers to the capacity through which individuals acknowledge the experiences of others as "response-ability" (p.15). The social address of another person, recognizing their culture, gender, and identity online provides individuals to expand their awareness of social issues (Rentschler, 2014). This online community-forming has furthered a cultural conversation regarding sexual violence in college by becoming a trending topic (Harding, 2015). Social media increase the capabilities of response-ability by mobilizing otherwise silenced voices across the world (Rentschler, 2014).

The mobilization and activism of college students has caught the attention of the upper echelon of the federal government with President Barak Obama stating,

> We have seen an inspiring wave of student-led activism and a growing number of students who have found the courage to come forward and report attacks. And we owe all these young people an extraordinary debt of gratitude. But, we cannot stop there (Obama & Biden, 2014, para. 22).

In addition to the federal formation of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, in which federal resources and oversight for the topic would be provided, OCR would strive to promote transparency (White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014). OCR for the first publicly published the names of all 55 institutions of higher learning under Title IX investigation after activists argued

that the information should be made public (Harding, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014b; White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014).

Twitter. Founded in 2006, Twitter is a social media platform where users are able to share thoughts, images, web links, and more in posts referred to as "tweets" (Boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010). Often referred to as a microblogging site, individuals are able to broadcast brief text updates about their lives in a publicly-accessible online space via "tweets," postings or updates (Java, Song, Finin, & Tseng, 2009). Unlike other social media sites, Twitter restricts users' posts to a total of 140-characters, requiring users to exercise brevity in communicating experiences and opinions (Boyd et al., 2010; Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014). Further, researchers find that Twitter remains the platform through which real-time updates and breaking news are shared more so than any other social media outlet (Zubiaga et al., 2015). Through succinct textual posts, users efficiently share thoughts that are most likely to be consumed by a user's network and beyond (Java et al., 2009; Zubiaga et al., 2015). Regular blogging provides unlimited space for an individual to share happenings and reactions through narrative form; conversely, microblogging values discursive dialogue (Java et al., 2009; Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014).

As of June 2016, Twitter hosts 313 million monthly active users in which the site is largely accessed via mobile device (82% of active users) (Twitter, 2017a). Nearly 80% of all active users have accounts outside of the United States, as Twitter is supported by more than 40 languages (Twitter, 2017a). Research finds that approximately 80% of U.S. adults participate in social media, a quarter of which use Twitter (Duggan et al., 2015).

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The largest demographic of Twitters users is identified as being college-educated adults

aged 18-29 years (Duggan et al., 2015). Further, more than one-third of U.S. adults online

access the platform on a daily basis (Duggan et al., 2015). In January 2016, there were an

estimated 303 million tweets shared per day over a 30-day span (Edwards, 2016). Twitter

also boasts that there are more than one billion unique visits to websites each month due

to URLs being embedded within tweets (Twitter, 2017a).

A unique dialogical aspect to tweeting on Twitter, is "retweeting," where users

forward posts authored by other users (Boyd et al., 2010; Zubiaga et al., 2015). The

practice of retweeting contributes to what Boyd et al. (2010) refer to as "conversational

ecology," where digital conversations are amplified by multiple users, giving rise to a

shared sense of emotional and communicative context (para. 5). Retweets are indicated

with an "RT" within the post, attributing the original messages author (Zubiaga et al.,

2015). Furthermore, retweets can themselves be retweeted to the nth degree, with a near

endless re-sharing of a single post (Zubiaga et al., 2015). It is important to note that

individual users do not have to be directly connected to one other to view or retweet

another user's postings (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014). The architecture of

the platform allows users to casually interact without having to formally "follow" one

another, allowing conversations to build outside of the parameters of interpersonal

connections (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014).

The use of tagging, or using the at symbol (@) with another individual's account

name, allows users to directly connect a tweet to other accounts online (ThriveHive,

2015). By tagging another user within a tweet, it ensures that the tagged account receives

notification that someone has referenced them within a comment (ThriveHive, 2015).

Further, the use of tagging increases the likelihood of a broader audience reviewing the message and online engagement, as the followers of the tagged individual will also be able to review and/or respond to the tweet (ThriveHive, 2015).

Hashtags, the use of the numerical symbol (#) in front of a word or phrase, became a component of the language of Twitter in 2007, when updates regarding a natural disaster in California were posted including the phrase "#sandiegofire" (Guha, 2015; Zubiaga et al., 2015). Hashtags are a linguistic marker through which social media consumers can follow posts paralleling in theme or topic by numerous users (Guha, 2015; Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014). Tweets containing the same hashtag references are accessed through a searchable database within the platform (Twitter, 2017b). Twitter advises users to be thoughtful in their hashtag use – keeping it both specific to the conversation but broad enough to capture the attention of users otherwise not participating in the discussion (Wadlington, 2016).

Twitter provides guidance to users as to how to effectively use hashtags to promote a larger conversation, including the use of sub- and cross-hashtags (Wadlington, 2016). For example, in this research study, the hashtags investigated are narratives of college sexual violence. However, without being privy to that information, users may not seek out to engage in this online conversation. Sub-hashtags are very general terms that can be used to garner attention. The term "rape" is too widely used to be associated with any one account of sexual violence; but using #rape in association with a more specific hashtag (i.e. #SurvivingCostMe) can help to provide context to the narrative while also directing users who search the term online. Users who follow the tag "#rape" could eventually be guided to #SurvivingCostMe. Cross-hashtags are the use of other hashtags

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used within a tweet to invite users to follow another stream of conversation online. The intent, unlike sub-hashtags, is to lead online users to engage in a separate, but similar topic.

Another distinctive feature to Twitter is that a time-sensitive list of the most commonly referenced topics or hashtags are provided to users (Zubiaga et al., 2015). Referred to as "trending," users are able to see what top ten topics are most current and widespread throughout the world-wide network (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014; Zubiaga et al., 2015). Trending topics algorithmically determined by frequency of mentions by Twitter users (Twitter, 2017b). After reviewing the list, users, including the media, are able then to review all public tweets associated with any given topic by following associated hashtags (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014; Zubiaga et al., 2015). As Guha (2015) notes, for a topic to become widely relevant, retweeted, or trending, the simple use of the "#" is not enough; the use of the hashtag and phrase must resonate with a larger audience within the platform, encouraging users to actively participate in the conversation. Largely, trending topics are relevant to current events (Guha, 2015; Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014).

Increasingly, Twitter has become a space where social movements are born. "Hashtivism," shorthand for "hashtag activism," is the use of hashtagged statements to bring awareness to social justice topics (Blay, 2016; Burkhalter, n.d.). Hashtivism efforts, including #YesAllWomen, #RapeCultureIsWhen, and #EveryDaySexism are efficient and wide-reaching campaigns that illicit responses worldwide (Blay, 2016). These hashtag movements shape social issues of the 21st century by humanizing topics of domestic violence, sexual assault, and gender-based harassment. Glenn (2015) highlights

that the use of hashtivism can promote awareness to groups otherwise disinterested or

unaware of social justice movements. Further, research document a positive relationship

between hashtivism online and activism in real life (Valenzuela, 2013). Blay (2016)

argues that Twitter is a "contentious and transformative space for feminist discourse" by

providing a space for private pain to be shared in public space with unprecedented impact

(para. 5). Nunez (2015) agrees stating that conversations of survivors via Twitter prompt

widespread awareness – increasing the consciousness of sexual violence, including its

incidence and associated harms.

For example, when then presidential candidate Donald Trump's remarks from a

2005 exchange with a television reporter regarding sexually assaulting women were

shared publicly, and then rationalized as "locker room talk," Twitter provided a space for

a feminist response (Lekakis, 2016). #NotOkay began when author Kelly Oxford tweeted

"Women: tweet me your first assaults. They aren't just stats" on October 7, 2016

(Domonoske, 2016). Within nine hours, one million women responded to Oxford's

request via Twitter, sharing narratives of being molested as children, groped as adults,

and raped repeatedly throughout their lives (Domonoske, 2016). "…Women sharing their

stories on Twitter have flung open another door – to a world of sexual violence that is

discussed in secrecy or not discussed at all" (Domonoske, 2016, para. 23).

French (2015) and Rhoads (2016) share that, similarly, #BlackLivesMatter

initially started as a hashtag to illuminate discussions of institutionalized racism and

violence following the death of Trayvon Martin, but metamorphosed into an engaging

social movement. Movement co-founder Opal Tometi (2015) shared that the movement

sought to build upon social justice and civil rights efforts while also capitalizing off of the accessibility of social media platforms.

> When we founded #BlackLivesMatter in 2013, we wanted to create a political space within and amongst our communities for activism that could stand firmly on the shoulders of movements that have come before us, such as the civil rights movement, while innovating on its strategies, practices and approaches to finally centralize the leadership of those existing at the margins of our economy and our society. (Tometi, 2015, January 18, para. 5)

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Scrutiny and increased public attention has led towards a more open dialogue regarding the topic of sexual assault within higher education. News sites including those associated with *The Huffington Post*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times* maintain up-to-the-minute accounts of "campus mishandlings" of sexual violence profiling campuses like Princeton, Dartmouth, and the University of Virginia. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* has reported on the topic of Title IX in nearly every edition since the publishing of the original 55 campuses under investigation in May 2014.

Psychopolitical Validity Theory. Psychopolitical validity (PPV), identified by Isaac Prilleltensky (2003), provides an overarching framework describing the processes of oppression and liberation in regards the psychological and political impact of power. Prilleltensky (2003) defines oppression by "asymmetric power relations," characterized by the dominance of one group by another (p. 195). The impact of this dominance includes political exclusion and psychological harms associated with being affiliated with the subordinate group (e.g., shame and silence) (Prilleltensky, 2003). For liberation of the

subordinate group to become possible, Prilleltensky (2003) believes that collective action must occur.

A facet of PPV theory is the argument that power is exercised upon a subordinate group or culture through framing issues, or "agenda setting" (Speer, 2008, p. 201). Through agenda setting, the dominant group is able to set socially constructed barriers for communication, including what is deemed acceptable for public discussion and what can be silenced (Speer, 2008).

Prilleltensky (2003) recognizes the impact of power, or a lack thereof, upon the total wellbeing of an individual and of a marginalized group. Sexual violence is an aggressive act of power exercised through sexual means to dominate another individual. The impact of sexual violence, and the loss of personal agency, negatively affects survivors. Survivors of sexual violence are likely to experience post-traumatic stress disorders, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and self-harm as a result of their trauma (Ali, 2011; Gidycz et al., 2008; Ullman & Breckin, 2003). As supported by PPV, it is important to recognize the psychological and political harms associated with power imbalance (Prilleltensky, 2003). For survivors of sexual violence to overcome their trauma, rape culture, and the stigma associated with victimization, they, too, must overcome the supreme psychological and political forces keeping them silenced.

Prilleltensky (2003) argues that the act of liberation is the resistance of oppressive, dominating forces to bring about a balance to power and in the wellbeing of the afflicted, subordinate group. It is only through the collective understanding and awareness of affliction by the dominated group that they are able to employ mechanisms to resist and seek liberation (Prilleltensky, 2003). For progress towards liberation to be

possible, both on a personal and collective level, non-dominant groups must seek solidarity through shared action (Prilleltensky, 2003). Through this research, I argue that sexual violence survivors have formed groups with a sociopolitical focus, seeking to challenge the narrative regarding sexual assault in higher education, via social media.

      Feminist Communication Theory. Feminist Theory, the analysis of power dynamics, has worked diligently for more than 40 years to bring topics of violence against women to the forefront of a national dialogue (Conroy, 2013; Henry & Powell, 2014). Feminist theorists argue that a paternalistic perspective regarding sexual violence has a silencing effect, focusing the conversation on the survivor's contributions to the violence rather than reviewing the culture through which sexual assault is proliferated (Fisher et al., 2010). Fisher et al. (2010) argue that the topic of sexual violence is highly politicized and viewed through a paternalistic lens, often emphasizing the contributing factors of the female survivor that precipitated the violence. As a result, the role of feminist theory is required to ensure an equitable review of the topic, not only for research purposes, but to also aid in its prevention (Fisher et al., 2010).

      Originally, feminist scholars viewed social media as means through which gender dynamics and the marginalization of women occurred (Conroy, 2013; Rentschler, 2014). However, social media can also be a tool of liberation by providing a space for culture, gender, power, and language to exist and be shared freely (Shaw, 2014; Prilleltensky, 2003). Feminist communication theory argues the role of social media as both a space where minority voices can be more comfortably shared as well as a space where dominating narratives can continue to proliferate (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009; Shaw, 2014). As highlighted in Shaw's (2014) work, social media is a place where users "perform

identity" through the creation and maintenance of "public or quasi-public profiles" (p. 274). Further, in this performance, users are able to challenge paternalistic media structures by redefining "media insiders and media outsiders," meaning that the user is able to share critical narratives and media stories (p. 276). Feminist communication theory sees CMC as a tool through which critical theory and argument can be shared, not as being good or bad, but as being of use (Shaw, 2014).

Shaw (2014) highlights the importance of identifying the ways in which power is embedded within online communities to determine the potential for harm or support provided to social equality. Through the ease of access and immediate impact that posting online can have, users are able to target and harass, or "troll," specific individuals (Harding; 2015; Shaw, 2014). Stories of female-targeted harassment online have made headlines, including #GamerGate where game developer Zoë Quinn received death and rape threats by anonymous trolls after being accused of receiving positive gaming reviews as a result of an intimate relationship with a journalist (Harding, 2015). Research of 3,000 Internet users found that women aged 18 to 24 are disproportionally more harassed than any other demographic of users online, with 26% reported being stalked online and 25% were sexually harassed (Duggan et al., 2014). Other instances where women are targeted online, including the posting of intimate photos and videos without permission on revenge pornography sites, have been detailed and researched to document the misogyny that lives online (Harding, 2015; Shaw, 2014).

However, feminist communication theory seeks to identify the ways in which non-dominant cultures (e.g., genderqueer, minorities, and women) are able to have equitable opportunity to overcome oppressive forces via communication (Littlejohn &

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Foss, 2009). Feminist communication theory underscores power and privilege in association with language and the channels through which messages are transmitted (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009; Shaw, 2014). Shaw (2014) argues that CMC and online platforms privilege those within dominant groups on the basis of race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Though feminist scholars argue that technological media favors privileged populations, they, too, acknowledge that social media can be used to challenge rape culture, promote response-ability, and build community (Rentschler, 2014). As shared by Emily May, Executive Director of Hollaback!, an international anti-street harassment non-profit organization, in her TEDxWomen talk of 2012, "In this social media world where everyone has followers, followers become the new leaders," and those who are less privileged are able to share narratives otherwise silenced and ignored (Rentschler, 2014; TEDxWomen, 2012, 4:25).

   Muted Group Theory. Brownmiller (1975) argues that the power dynamics exhibited in sexual violence, the dominance by an aggressor over a survivor, often speaks to gender inequalities between men and women (Brownmiller, 1975). Kramarae (1981) espouses that language does not serve all members of a given culture equally, as it is largely formed and managed by dominant members of the group. Women, and others within subordinate groups, are often silenced or unable to properly articulate their experiences as the cultural norms and barriers associated with language serve the dominant group (Kramarae, 1981). Rape survivors can be categorized as a muted group, subject to the communicative culture of the dominant group that deems conversations about violence, sex, and gender to be taboo (Burnett et al., 2009; Kramarae, 1981; Wood, 2005).

With the advent and popular adoption of social media as a part of daily discourse, the culture of social media are often reflective of that of the dominant culture. However, with social media providing places and spaces for community and capacity building of out-group members, the research argue that survivors of college sexual violence are mobilizing from trauma survivors to social justice advocates online (Pérez-Peña, 2013).

Kutner (2016) highlights the utility of social media by muted groups, specifically sexual violence survivors, to grow attention to otherwise neglected topics. Specifically, however, Kutner (2016) argues that social media campaigns targeting specific campuses in their inabilities to prevent sexual violence are most effective when the survivor choses to come forward publicly. Kutner (2016) profiles a senior at St. Olaf College who presented a portrait of herself wearing a shirt stating "Ask me how my college is protecting my rapist" online. After the image was shared and the shirt reproduced, the student and her peers launched a website to continue to illicit support. The site received 100,000 views within its first week (Kutner, 2016). Andrea Pino shared "…the wave of change has only really happened because of the surge of those [survivors] who have come forward" (Kutner, 2016, para. 20). However, sexual violence survivors, largely unknown, only find power in deciding to be publicly associated with their trauma.

With recent federal legislation speaking to increased oversight, this once muted group has the weight of the most dominating force in education on its side – the DOE. Power dynamics are thematic to the research project. It is hypothesized that there is a shift in the digitized conversations of college sexual violence in which the muted group of survivors begin to amplify their narrative, going on to lead national conversations. This shifting from being muted to being voluble is crucial to the research design. In

seeking to identify the use of social media by college rape survivors, the communicative value of sharing of paralleling experiences must be methodologically examined. This examination is important as the stories communicated by survivors are likely to counter the instutionalized proliferation of rape myths and acceptance.

> [Rape] myths are so enmeshed in our cultural attitudes toward rape and sexual assault, that the manner in which campus leadership and administrators structure institutional policy may reflect a socioculturally hostile attitude toward victims, who are often, if not always, assumed to be heterosexual women. (Carrington Wooten & Mitchell, 2016, p. 4)

Communication and rhetoric are often developed by the majority to define concepts and experiences of the majority (Kramarae, 1981). However, muted groups often experience dissonance in attempting to define their own experiences. For example, Carrington Wooten and Mitchell (2016) highlight research in which 45% to 63% of sexual assault survivors did not define their assaults as "rape," or they defined the trauma as a "miscommunication." The researchers found that this muted group struggled to identify their experience formally, using the term "rape" (Carrington Wooten & Mitchell, 2016). However, participating survivors were able to describe the assault as being "wrong" (Carrington Wooten & Mitchell, 2016).

Conclusion

2014 is known as "the year colleges were forced to confront sexual violence among students" (Gordon, 2014, para. 1). The year would begin with President Barak Obama establishing the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault as 31 students and alumni from the University of California, Berkeley would submit

federal complaints against the university for alleged mishandling of sexual violence cases

(Anderson, 2014b; Gordon, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights,

2015a). OCR would also receive more than 580 sexual violence complaints, a 383%

increase as compared the previous four-years combined (Ali, 2012; U.S. Department of

Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2015a). And, importantly, three narratives regarding

sexual violence in college would emerge in which social media would associate a

corresponding hashtag – #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe.

The following chapters will detail the methodological approach to capturing tweets and

their analysis in determining the utility of social media for sexual violence survivors and

contributing factors that promote the narrative's success online.

Chapter 3 – Research Design and Methodology

This research study seeks to deconstruct the symbolically-crafted dialogic expressions of sexual violence survivors via Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). Communication is an active process and the medium employed (i.e., CMC) provides the structure through which cultural norms are upheld (Kramarae, 1981; Walther, 2011). Rhetoric, as expanded upon by Littlejohn and Foss (2009) and Kuypers and King (2009), is the active and deliberate use of symbols to influence thought and action via communicated messages. Littlejohn and Foss (2009) elaborate that any communicated message is rhetoric, be it verbal or nonverbal, and regardless of the medium through which it is transmitted. Often, symbols used in communicative discourse are value-laden; such values are often indicative of the perspectives and experiences of the communicator (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Kuypers and King (2009) argue that rhetoric is both strategic and goal-oriented, intentionally seeking to produce a desired outcome.

Language in its most basic, written form provides insights into the sociocultural constructs (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014). Through the use of semiotics, social media users utilize grammar, syntax, and frequency of communication to convey various messages (Page, 2012). Kuypers (2009) argues that communicators seeking a desired response from a receiver are mindful of numerous communicative elements, such as language and tone, and the proper utilization of rhetoric aids in eliciting the desired response. The use of rhetoric online requires the communicator to rely solely upon nonverbal cues in the transmission of a message; cues include the use of grammar, punctuation, length of text, use of reviewable topic material (i.e., hashtags), and

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illustrative symbols referred to as emoticons or emojis (Rightler-McDaniels &

Hendrickson, 2014). The frequencies of message transmission and to whom the messages

are directed are also value-laden elements of CMC.

Rhetorical criticism, or analysis, is "the systematic process of illuminating and

evaluating products of human activity" (Kuypers, 2009, p.13). This methodological

approach actively involves the researcher in identifying communicatively valuable

patterns of phenomena (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000). Oliver

(2001) argues that to get to the root of the social, political, and cultural impacts of our

other-ness, we must examine the discourse used to describe it. Further, she argues that

our desire to be recognized and heard is a function of power imbalance. Therefore, this

research study requires analysis to describe the social conditions through which public

discourse of sexual violence occur – to determine the power of sharing survivorship

online.

A rhetorical analysis of publicly accessible comments on Twitter in association

with #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe was performed. The

feminist, social movement, and narrative values of this analysis documents the

communicative and cultural value of each hashtag (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000). The

blending of storytelling online by groups muted by sexual trauma to counter public

discourse regarding rape culture and/or gender norms requires the wider focus of critical

rhetorical analysis (Huckin, Andrus, & Clary-Lemon, 2012).

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer one ultimate question: How are college survivors of

sexual violence using social media? In seeking this information, the following sub-

questions will be addressed: What factors regarding the hashtag (e.g., popularity of the initial narrative, contributing authors, etc.) illicit active participation online? What elements of the hashtag (e.g., timing of initial post, its feature in news stories, etc.) contribute to its longevity or breadth of impact online? Are there paralleling communicative elements of the narratives shared in association with the identified hashtags (e.g., self-disclosure of trauma, activist language, tagging of other Twitter users, etc.)? And, finally, how do counter-narratives and/or the reactions of social media trolls impact participation in association with the hashtag?

This research study is seeking to determine the abilities of these hashtags to emerge as trending topics to the extent of which they have become associated with the topic of sexual violence in higher education. I am seeking further understanding of the abilities of hashtags and their associated narratives to resonate broadly and the possible impact they have had as a result.

Population

In investigating the utility of social media for survivors of sexual violence, this research study analyzed public tweets associated with three specific hashtags: #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe. The population will potentially contain a vast array of participants – from self-identified survivors to trolls.

Setting

Sexual violence is an uncomfortable topic. To seek out a setting through which survivors feel comfortable in their vulnerability, sharing accounts of violence, shame, struggle, and, hopefully, perseverance, I sought to investigate the use of social media as the place in which such narratives are shared. Further, I sought out the social media

platform most conducive to a collective community – Twitter. As previously stated, Twitter allows users to determine how much of their real-life identity they wish to disclose online. Users can alter their names and other identifying information at their discretion to preserve their privacy, if desired. Due to this allowance for users to protect aspects of their identity, this social media platform will be analyzed exclusively. Furthermore, based upon the unique dialogical features of Twitter, including character-count restrictions, timeliness of trending topics, and the ability for users to follow conversations using the same linguistic markers, or hashtags, this platform provides a space for researchers to further investigate popularized or sporadic conversations conveniently online (Boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010; Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014; Zubiaga, Spina, Martíez, & Fresno, 2015).

Sample Selection

Twitter users who use the following hashtags in publicly accessible tweets are identified as participants in this research study: #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe. Aspects of participants' identities, including user name, profile picture, and/or their location, may be accessible to further describe the identity they present online.

It is important to note that Twitter is not the most populated nor diverse social media platform (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015). Users are able to opt into or out of conversations, including the ones identified for purposes of this research study, based upon the other Twitter users they choose to follow (Boyd et al., 2010). As a result, this setting can be limiting to the research based upon a potentially homogenous group of participants. Some participants, therefore, may be represented

frequently or infrequently based upon their choice to engage in associated hashtags which may or may not be associated with the rhetorical success of #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, or #SurvivingCostMe.

There is no way to control for the use of the hashtags by Twitter users that are not affiliated with the conversations as noted below; therefore, there is the possibility that individuals sampled for purposes of this research are not seeking to engage in a dialogue about sexual violence in college. By using the identified hashtags, Twitter users who use the phrases #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and/or #SurvivingCostMe in any context will be included in the initial sample. Through a careful review of the data, messages that are identified not to be in association with the narratives of the three hashtags were omitted before they were coded. The frequency of the hashtag used in association with other topics will be noted, however, in determining the resonance of hashtag and its intended message. For example, if any one hashtag is found to be associated with another narrative, such as a movie title, that information will be noted.

#CarryThatWeight. On August 27, 2012, then sophomore Emma Sulkowicz alleged an acquaintance raped her in her residence hall room (Bolger, 2014; Sulkowicz, 2014). Sulkowicz describes a physically violent attack in which she was struck in the face, strangled, and sodomized (Bolger, 2014). Sulkowicz, not unlike many survivors of sexual violence, felt ashamed of her assault and chose not to report the incident to Columbia University or local authorities (Bolger, 2014). However, after learning of two additional students who had experienced sexual violence by the same alleged perpetrator, Sulkowicz sought assistance of the University in April 2013 (Bolger, 2014; Sulkowicz, 2014).

Following filing the complaint with Columbia University, a student conduct panel hearing convened to review the allegations of sexual violence to determine if a violation of University policy occurred (Bolger, 2014; Sulkowicz, 2014). The respondent was found not responsible for violating University policy in the three total complaints received, including Sulkowicz's complaint (Bolger, 2014). Afterwards, Sulkowicz joined 22 of her fellow Columbia students in filing a federal formal complaint against the institution for alleged mishandlings of sexual assault complaints (Pérez-Peña, 2014). On May 14, 2013, displeased with the findings of Columbia University, Sulkowicz reported her assault to police; however, Sulkowicz contends the reporting of her assault to police was triggering and traumatic as officers questioned the lengthy delay in her report and her difficulty in recalling details of the evening, such as the clothing worn the night of the assault (Bolger, 2014).

Sulkowicz's name would become nationally known for the first time in coverage of Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's request to the Senate Appropriations committee for additional federal funds and oversight of sexual violence claims in higher education following a meeting with the student and others in New York (Pereira, 2014). Later, her name would become identified with the modern Millennial movement against rape culture and sexual violence in higher education.

Following the university hearing and police interrogation, Sulkowicz consulted with a faculty member to channel her experiences and frustrations into her senior thesis (Bolger, 2014). Mattress Performance: Carry That Weight, the official title of her thesis, required Sulkowicz to carry the 55-pound extra-long twin sized mattress from her

residence hall, similar to the mattress she was sexually assault upon, each day of her

senior year until her alleged rapist was removed from campus (Bolger, 2014).

> A mattress is the perfect size for me to just be able to carry it enough that I can
>
> continue with my day, but also have enough that I have to continually struggle
>
> with it. I think the other thing about that is that, there, we keep them in our
>
> bedroom, which is, like, our intimate space or private space where we can retreat
>
> if we don't want to deal with anyone at that moment. But, um, I think the past
>
> year or so of my life has been really marked by, like, telling people what
>
> happened in that most intimate, private space and bringing it out into the light. So,
>
> I think the act of carrying something that is normally found in our bedroom out
>
> into the light is supposed to mirror the way I've talked to the media, news
>
> channels, etcetera. (Columbia Daily Spectator, 2014, 0:57-1:41)

Sulkowicz would walk across her graduation stage the following spring still

carrying said mattress (Mitra, 2015). In a YouTube interview with Columbia University's

student newspaper, amassing more than 2.2 million views, Sulkowicz acknowledged her

hesitancy in becoming more widely known as a result of her performance art (Columbia

Daily Spectator, 2014). As espoused by Mitra (2015), the physical manifestation of

Sulkowicz's trauma through the literal and metaphorical carrying of her mattress serves

as a public reminder of an often private pain.

#IStandWithJackie. On November 19, 2014, *Rolling Stone Magazine* published

"A Rape on Campus," a 9000-word story highlighting the accounts of a gang rape at the

University of Virginia (UVA) (Hartmann, 2015; Rubin Erdely, 2014). A student

identified as Jackie, was invited by a co-worker at the university's aquatic center to

attend a fraternity party on September 28, 2012 (Rubin Erdely, 2014). While at the party, Jackie, then a first-year student, followed her date to an upstairs bedroom just after midnight. Upon entering the bedroom, Jackie was brutally physically and sexually assaulted by a group of seven men.

> My eyes were adjusting to the dark. And I said his name and turned around…I heard voices and I started to scream and someone pummeled into me and told me to shut up. And that's when I tripped and fell against the coffee table and it smashed underneath me and this other boy, who was throwing his weight on top of me. Then one of them grabbed my shoulders…One of them put his hand over my mouth and I bit him – and he straight-up punched me in the face…One of them said, "Grab its motherfucking leg." As soon as they said it, I knew they were going to rape me. (Rubin Erdely, 2014, para. 8)

Rolling Stone journalist Sabrina Rubin Erdely sought to document a survivor's account of college sexual assault to highlight the proliferation of rape culture within higher education (Coronel, Coll, & Kravitz, 2015). A source within UVA referred the journalist to Jackie, a rising junior with whom the source was familiar and whose accounts of gang rape were known. Rubin Erdely interviewed Jackie eight times over three months in 2014, preparing to share the exposé of UVA's failures to properly support rape survivors and prevent such crimes from occurring on their campus (Coronel et al., 2015).

Following the publishing of *A Rape on Campus: A Brutal Assault and Struggle for Justice at UVA* in November 2014, the story attracted national press, being viewed nearly 3 million times online (Rubin Erdely, 2014; Coronel et al., 2015). However, not long after publishing, the story began to attract negative attention. Questions regarding

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the quality of reporting, editing, and fact checking of Jackie's story were soon shared in blogs, articles, and podcasts; Rubin Erdely's abilities as an investigative journalist and counter-narratives speaking against details in Jackie's accounts became more public (Coronel et al., 2015). Jackie's friends, described as discouraging her from reporting her attack in the *A Rape on Campus*, came forward publicly to discredit their depictions and provide context to the night of Jackie's assault (Juran, 2016). The fraternity identified by Jackie issued a statement denying that a fraternity event was held on the evening alleged by Jackie and that they had no known members working at the aquatic center with Jackie that term (Hartmann, 2015).

On December 5, 2014, 15 days after the story was published, *Rolling Stone* retracted the article and Jackie's story (Coronel et al., 2015). Rubin Erdely and her editors had hoped their investigation would sound an alarm about campus sexual assault and would challenge the University of Virginia and other universities to do better. Instead, the magazine's failure may have spread the idea that many women invent rape allegations (Coronel et al., 2015, para. 25). Following the retraction, in which the magazine stated that its trust in Jackie was "misplaced," the hashtag #IStandWithJackie emerged (Coronel et al., 2015; Yung, 2015).

#SurvivingCostMe. On November 24, 2014, @HuffPostCollege tweeted "So we want to invite survivors to speak in their own words, through a photo or a tweet, what #SurvivingCostMe." The hashtag "SurvivingCostMe" was born in that moment. The post was retweeted 16 times by accounts including @AfterRape, the self-professed account of a U.S. college co-ed who was raped her first year in college, @DanaBolger, the co-founder of KnowYourIX, and @collegetalk, an affiliate of the College Media Association

(About KYIX, 2017). Unlike other hashtags associated with the Millennial student movement against rape and rape culture, this hashtag is not associated with any one trauma narrative; #SurvivingCostMe transcends an individual experience.

Data Collection Process

Due to the photographic nature of Instagram, the brief and private use of some social media applications, such as SnapChat, or the likelihood of accounts being too indicative of a user's real life identity (i.e., Facebook), only publicly accessible tweets, via the text-based platform Twitter, were analyzed. I used the advanced search feature on Twitter to review the public tweets of users associated with the following hashtags: #SurvivingCostMe, #CarryThatWeight, and #IStandWithJackie. I created an Excel spreadsheet in which the following data will be recorded: tweet number, tweet, author, number of likes, number of retweets.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data was collected through the use of Twitter's advanced search feature, allowing me to capture all tweets and retweets associated with the aforementioned cases. Tweets were entered into an Excel file manually. It is important to note that Twitter does provide an option for individuals to request historical data for a fee; however, upon request, it was learned that the request was cost prohibitive to receive transcripts of #CarryThatWeight and #IStandWithJackie (A. Nowlin, personal communication, July 18, 2016). There is no exception for educational research purposes.

Tweets were transcribed into an Excel file in order from originating tweet (genesis of the hashtag) to the most recent date. The Excel file's headings include tweet number, in order from oldest tweet to most recent, to provide a unique identifier for each

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posting (i.e. the first tweet is referred to as "tweet 1"), the full tweet itself, Twitter

username of the tweet's author, and the date the tweet was posted. In addition, the

number of likes the tweet received and the total number of times the tweet was retweeted

were documented for each post. It is important to note that several tweets included

embedded photographs that were not included within the dataset due to this research

being a textual analysis. Most frequently, tweets that contained images were due to the

sharing of a news or internet source in which the photograph linked the tweet to a

webpage. Web addresses, or URLs, are included within the dataset and included in the

"tweet" column.

A data audit was then performed to eliminate tweets that are not affiliated with the

hashtags message regarding sexual violence. For example, if a tweet uses one of the three

associated hashtags in promotion of a pharmacological product unaffiliated with sex or

gender identity, the post is eliminated from the sample. In the case of #CarryThatWeight,

the hashtag is also associated with a Beatle's song of the same name within the Abbey

Road album. Tweets containing #CarryThatWeight that referenced the aforementioned

song were eliminated from the dataset. This cleansing of the data is to ensure the integrity

of the coding process.

It is important to note that this research study investigates information shared

from public tweets – including capturing individual survivor stories or monitoring the use

of hyperlinks within each post. However, due to the volume of tweets documented in

association with the three hashtags, every tenth tweet was sampled and analyzed for

purposes of more rigorous open coding. The selection of every tenth tweet is intentional

to capture a wider range of dates, participants, and posts. Sampling every tenth tweet is

also designed to eliminate lengthy discourse between individual posters and capture the overall essence of the hashtag itself. This dataset was then uploaded into NVivo for coding.

NVivo is used to determine thematic patterns. Open coding processes are used so that patterns, or nodes, can be further rhetorically analyzed (Frey et al., 2000). Kramarae (1981) argues that codes themselves (i.e., emotion vs. task) often speak to engendered communicative values. Therefore, the codes identified through processing of the data will speak to the engendered experiences of the social media participants based upon their public participation in the case studies identified. The codes will then be reviewed by the researcher and an additional coder asynchronously to ensure the validity of the data. Following the review of the data, I created the nodes through which I and the second coder compared each of the 819 tweets sampled. Following all coding, Cronbach's alpha scores were calculated to determine interrater reliability (Manerikar, & Manerikar, 2015). Any nodes receiving an α less than 0.70 were re-analyzed by each coder to determine any rationale for disagreement (Manerikar, & Manerikar, 2015).

For purposes of this study, the value of CMC provides the opportunity through which rhetoric can be further investigated, including the structure of statements and linguistic markers used without having the role of the researcher impeding upon any one individual's tweet (Herring, 2004; Melzow, 2012). In addition to the codes/nodes generated by each case, an overall context to each narrative will be provided – including its genesis, major contributors, frequently used terms, and a timeline through which the narrative spanned social media. Herring (2004) argues that the structure of CMC, including structure, meaning, interaction, and social behavior, lends itself to rhetorical

analysis through computer-mediated discourse analysis.

The data was also quantitatively analyzed, reviewing the diffusion of the hashtag's lifespan online utilizing Roger's (1962) diffusion of innovation. In this tracking, dates associated with tweets were charted along with the quantity of tweets and retweets posted. Popular postings, defined as tweets that have the most "likes" or retweets were also documented quantitatively, to document its reach online. Though this research study is unique, the quantitative evaluation of the data seeks to aid in the replication of similar research for future projects.

Validity and Reliability

Qualitatively, this research highlight the unique experiences of the contributors to #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe. The data was coded via NVivo and verified by an additional coder to promote consistency through the coding process. The interpretation of the codes were cross-referenced in published research regarding the experiences of sexual violence. The findings are individualized to the three case studies identified and emerge organically from the very words used online.

Quantitatively, this research seeks to document the social phenomena of #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe through charting their origins, fluctuations of use online, and when the narrative reached a tipping point by becoming a more widely discussed topic online. Through the use of a mixed methodological design, I seek to promote the highest standards of research by providing a more well-rounded perspective of these narratives and of the utility of CMC in regards to college sexual violence.

Role of the Researcher

I am a cisgender, heterosexual, educated American woman. I am a certified victim advocate, feminist, and higher education administrator who works to support the Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) at a small, regional university. I have provided support to students who have been violently brutalized at the hands of those they felt they could trust; I have escorted students to our local hospital to seek a sexual assault forensic exam, sitting hours with them in the emergency department; I have attempted to soothe the frustration survivors have felt as they sought to address their assaults legally, awaiting corrective action from judges. I've also worked to support a student as they felt violated not only by the individual that sexually assaulted them, but by the university they thought could aid in addressing the problem. I have also provided assistance to the parents of accused students, wrought with anxiety and fear, to explain my commitment to due process in managing reports of sexual misconduct. I have sat with those responding to allegations of sexual violence as they attempt to reconcile their interpretations of an experience in light of a counter-narrative from another. In my professional work, I am diligent in providing equity under Title IX so that students who have been harmed by sexual violence and those accused of these acts through the appropriate operationalization of campus investigative and conduct processes.

However, for this specific research project, I carry the responsibility of representing the voices of those I have encountered along with the milieu of those participating in relevant and open dialogues. I put my near decade's worth of experience as a higher education professional to work as I interpret the experiences of college sexual violence as well as my training and experience as a victim advocate to process the

rhetorical value of the data. My purpose in this research project is to better understand how Millennial college students use social media to not only share their survivorship, but amplify their collective voices. I used my awareness of student development theory, the neurobiology of sexual trauma, and laws associated with sexual violence in higher education in the interpretation of the data, codes, and results of this research project. I also welcomed the learning process that comes with exposing myself to the information disclosed with #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe and allowing the data to represent the experiences of their authors.

Measures of Ethical Protection

Only tweets that are publicly accessible will be investigated for this research study. All associated materials, including news reports, will also be available via public spaces. Tweets in which a perpetrator or survivor of sexual violence not associated with the three cases are named by a third-party, the names will be redacted to protect their identities. Should an individual self-identify publicly, their names will be included in the data.

Chapter Four – Findings

#CarryThatWeight

Emma Sulkowicz, a senior visual arts student at Columbia University, took her frustrations against her campus' administration through her trending performance art piece wherein she carried the dorm mattress on which she was sexually assaulted across campus her entire senior year, including across the stage at her graduation (Barness, 2013). After feeling re-victimized through her campus' conduct proceeding, Sulkowicz filed a Title IX complaint and sought to bring her plight to a public space through performance art (Barness, 2013). #CarryThatWeight became a trending topic on social media where survivors and allies seek to maintain the conversation regarding sexual assault in higher education.

Origin of #CarryThatWeight Hashtag. On September 2, 2014, the first tweet to contain the hashtag #CarryThatWeight associated with Sulkowicz appeared on Twitter. "You go, girl, Emma! #YesMeansYes #MattressPerformance #CarryThatWeight" (tweet 1) was shared along with a link to an article from *The Guardian* featuring Sulkowicz's senior thesis of the same name (Valenti, 2014). On this same date, a YouTube video featuring Sulkowicz discussing her assault and performance art went live (Columbia Daily Spectator, 2014). This video has been viewed 2.2M times (Columbia Daily Spectator, 2014).

#CarryThatWeight Quantitative Analysis. A total of 4,172 tweets were publicly posted in association with #CarryThatWeight spanning September 2, 2014, to November 4, 2016. A total of 2,119 participants contributed to the hashtag, averaging 1.96 tweets per user, over the course of 794 total calendar days. Of the 794 days in which

the hashtag is used, there are a total of 291 active dates; meaning that contributors utilized #CarryThatWeight on 291 unique dates, or the hashtag was active 36.6% of all dates across its 794-day lifespan. A total of 16,591 likes and 12,658 retweets were documented, averaging 3.9 likes and 3.0 retweets per post. A total of 1,535 hyperlinks, or 36.8%, of all tweets captured in association with #CarryThatWeight included hyperlinks.
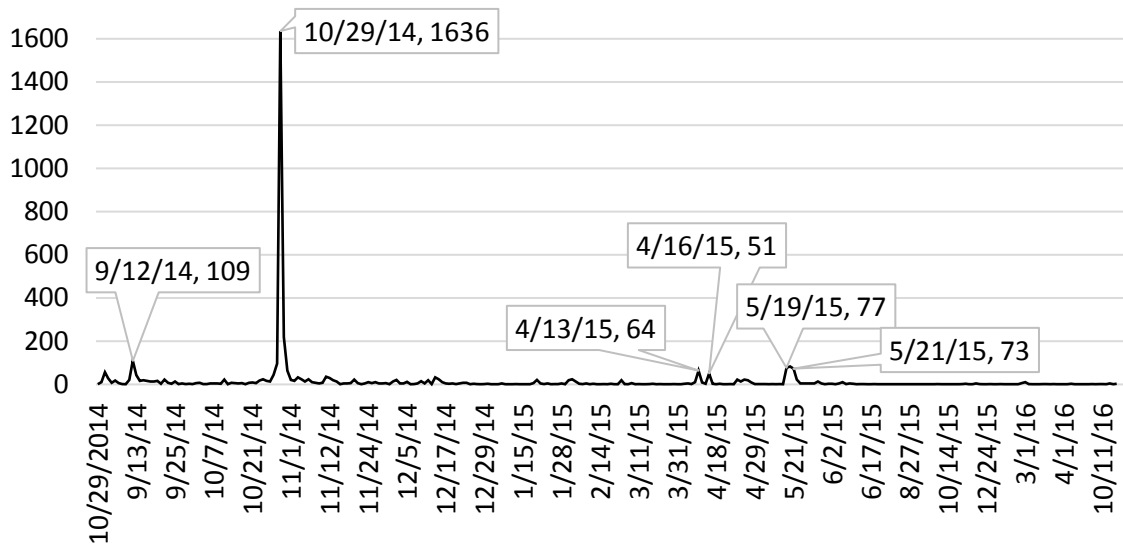
Figure 1: #CarryThatWeight Tweets by Date

The most active date of participation was October 29, 2014, deemed the National Day of Action, in which 1,636 tweets were shared, 39.2% of all total tweets. The National Day of Action was an international effort by college students to demonstrate solidarity with Sulkowicz (Svokos, 2014). Coordinated via Facebook and Tumblr, more than 10,000 individuals shared they would participate in demonstrations at 130 campuses worldwide (Svokos, 2014).

Analysis of all the tweets shared reveals that one contributor in particular garnered the most likes and retweets in association with #CarryThatWeight (see Table 1). Popular music artist Lady Gaga co-wrote and performed an original song for the score of *The Hunting Ground*, a documentary released in 2015 that highlights the incidence of

sexual violence in higher education (Warren & Gaga, 2015; Ziering & Dick, 2015). The

original song, "'Til it Happens to You," and film were each nominated for an Oscar at the

2016 Academy Awards held February 28, 2016 (Payne, 2016; Warren & Gaga, 2015).

On February 29, 2016, following her live performance at the Oscars in which survivors

joined her on stage, Lady Gaga posted the following tweet "Buy ''Til It Happens To

You' portion of proceeds go to the charities #KnowYourIX #EndRapeOnCampus &

#CarryThatWeight https://itunes.apple.com/us/album/til-it-happens-to-you-

single/id104109716?app=itunes" (tweet 4,110). The comment was liked 8,888 times and

was retweeted 4,832 times.

The tweet receiving the second highest quantity of likes was posted by

@chronicle, the Twitter account for *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* on October 29,

2014, stating "Students nationwide hold #carrythatweight demonstrations in solidarity

with rape survivors; http://chroni/cl/10yWXUu," (tweet 1,266) highlighting participation

in the National Day of Action. The post garnered 145 likes and 213 retweets. The second

most re-tweeted comment was a tweet regarding Columbia's reaction to the student

protest on campus. ".@Columbia is fining the students who staged the #CarryThatWeight

day of action: http://bit.ly/1yr7qvx #fem2" which was retweeted 402 times and received

78 likes (tweet 2,858).

Table 1

Most Popular Tweets Associated with #CarryThatWeight

Tweet Number	Tweet	Date	Likes	Retweets
4,110	Buy "Til It Happens To You" portions of proceeds go to charities #KnowYourIX #EndRapeOnCampus & #CarryThatWeight https://itunes.apple.com/us/album/til-it-happens-to-you-single/id1041049716?app=itunes	2/29/2016	8,888	1432
1,266	Students nationwide hold #carrythatweight demonstrations in solidarity with rape survivors: http://chroni.cl/10yWXUu	10/29/2014	145	213
1,046	RT @[name redacted]: I support survivors of sexual and domestic violence and am helping to #carrythatweight #conncollcarries	10/2/2014	119	81
1,448	I stand w/Emma Sulkowicz & all sexual assault survivors who #carrythatweight every single day. Join the movement: http://t.co/V1vlWYOEoN	10/29/2014	103	117

Examination of the most commonly used phrases reveals that terms associated with sharing a URL were most commonly used (see Table 2). The phrase "http" is used in sharing hyperlinks embedded within a tweet. This analysis reveals that "http" was used in 1,535 tweets, 36.8% of all tweets shared in association with #CarryThatWeight. In total, "http," "com," "www," and "https" were amongst the top 10 terms used, appearing 4,424 times. With the term "survivor" was referenced 1,075 times, appearing in 25.8% of all tweets posted in association with #CarryThatWeight. "Sexual" was referenced 850 times, appearing in 20.4% of all tweets while "rape" was used 823 times with a frequency of 19.7%. Further analysis would find the following terms to be used regularly throughout the hashtag's discourse: "support" used 358 times, 8.6%, and "protest" used 240 times, 5.8%. Tagging of Columbia directly (@Columbia) was found in 164 tweets, 3.9%. The cross-hashtag #JusticeforJada used 204 times, 4.9%.

Table 2

Most Popular Terms Associated with #CarryThatWeight

Term	Count	Frequency
http	1,535	36.8%
com	1,402	33.6%
survivors	1,075	25.8%
sexual	850	20.4%
rape	823	19.7%
www	793	19.0%
https	694	16.6%
Columbia	618	14.8%
mattress	561	13.4%
Emma	509	12.2%

Interestingly, however, Sulkowicz herself is rarely directly tagged in any of the 4,172 tweets about her individual narrative. Her Twitter account @esulk has not posted a single tweet including the phrase #CarryThatWeight either. Further, she was only individually tagged less than 1% (n = 32) of the more than 4,100 tweets shared. Although her experience and story resonated widely online, it is not at her direct authorship via Twitter, but rather at the hands of supporters, hashtivists, and journalists worldwide.

#CarryThatWeight Qualitative Analysis. Open coding of every 10th tweet shared in association with #CarryThatWeight was performed, with a total of 417 tweets coded (α 0.84). Eight total nodes were identified through the coding process, as described in Table 3.

Table 3

Alpha Calculations with #CarryThatWeight Nodes

Node Name	Node Description	Prevalence	α
Survivor Support	Tweet expresses affirmation and support directly for Emma Sulkowicz	13.4%	0.70
Negating Narrative	Tweet provides evidence or an opinion that counters the narrative of Emma Sulkowicz	2.0%	0.83
Trolling Comment	Tweet is harassing in nature, including the use of abusive language	3.2%	0.85
Personal Disclosure	Author of the tweet shares their own experience with sexual violence	2.5%	0.79
Addresses Columbia University	Tweet references Columbia University directly	7.8%	0.88
Highlighting Hashtag	Tweet highlights the nature of the hashtag in reference to its subject or role on social media	2.0%	0.83
Hashtivism	Tweet discusses a call to action, including discussing the contributors action in reference to the hashtag or the action of others in reference to the hashtag	60.0%	0.86
URL	Tweet includes a web link	50.0%	0.99

Through this process, nearly two-thirds of all sampled tweets, 60.0%, references hashtivism. "#CarrythatWeight tumblr gives an opportunity to get involved in the movement that started on @Columbia's campus. http://carryingtheweighttogether.tumblr.com" (tweet 550), is an example of the engagement of digital natives in hashtivism. Similarly, the hashtivists utilized social media to promote their National Day of Action; "Join us http://www.carringtheweighttogether.com #carrythatweight October 29 at a campus near you. http://instagram.com/p/uexuAOgin1/" (tweet 570) and "How can you #carrythatweight on 10/29? Find out here: http://bit.ly/1uLSrZY @CarryTogether" (tweet 590) highlight efforts to raise awareness for the event.

Though the hashtag and subsequent hashtivism associated with

#CarryThatWeight originated with Sulkowicz's own sexual assault, open coding of

sampled tweets finds only 13.4% of the postings directly shared support for Sulkowicz.

Though several of the first several dozen tweets expressed open compassion and

commendation of Sulkowicz's bravery in becoming publicly associated with her survivor

narrative, the hashtag itself became a space in which hashtivists could discuss mobilizing

efforts to challenge rape culture. This momentum shift is evident in comparing the

following tweets: "So amazed by #EmmaSulkowicz and her strong will. I support you!

#nevergiveup #carrythatweight" (tweet, 60) to "TODAY meet us @12:30pm 1PP

courtyard 4 a group pic! Let's #CarryThatWeight together! Bring Ur pillows! #PaceU

#PaceUEndRape" (tweet 950).

Though #CarryThatWeight is associated with survivorship, the hashtag provides

little space for other survivors to share their own trauma. Only 2.5% of all tweets

sampled included a user's personal disclosure of their own sexual trauma, in which nearly

all examples of self-disclosure were shared in association with the National Day of

Action (see Table 4).

Table 4

Examples of Sampled Tweets Documenting Personal Disclosures with #CarryThatWeight

Tweet Number	Tweet	Date	Likes	Retweets
1,140	After he attempted to assault me at my place of work during finals, my department head called me in for a meeting #carrythatweight	10/29/2014	0	0
1,160	I learned that i should avoid walking down the street late at night. i didn't know I could be violated by someone I knew. #carrythatweight	10/29/2014	2	2
1,780	knowing i only have a few more months before my rape kit can't be used as evidence anymore #carrythatweight	10/29/2014	0	0

Though #CarryThatWeight did not foster additional survivor stories, Sulkowicz

shared her narrative with several diverse media outlets, ranging from her institution's

own student newspaper, feminist blogs, to national print and video news outlets,

throughout the duration of her public performance art. Half of all tweets sampled

included a web address reference embedded within its text (see Table 5). Several

embedded hyperlinks routed users to online media sites in which coverage of

Sulkowicz's efforts and that of her affiliated hashtivists were shared. Other links

provided access to personal social media accounts, including Facebook and Instagram,

where photographs of individuals shared their own protest efforts.

Table 5

Examples of Sampled Tweets Documenting Hyperlinks with #CarryThatWeight

Tweet Number	Tweet	Date	Likes	Retweets
70	#CarryThatWeight - College rape survivor will carry mattress around campus until her rapist is expelled http://www.salon.com/2014/09/03/college_rape_survivor_will_carry_her_mattress_around_campus_until_her_rapist_is_expelled / via @Salon	9/4/2014	1	0
400	Columbia student's #CarryThatWeight as 'an artwork of last resort' http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/22/arts/design/in-a-mattress-a-fulcrum-of-art-and-political-protest.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&version=HpSumSmallMediaHigh&module=second-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&_r=0 @robertasmithnyt #art	9/21/2014	4	5
720	"Together, we are building the movement to make sexual assault on college campuses unacceptable." #carrythatweight http://goo.gl/7zBosN	10/28/2014	0	1
1,010	TODAY is #CarryThatWeight National Day of Action: @ 4pm Columbia students+more will rally on Low Steps in solidarity http://on.fb.me/1Dw9EeI	10/29/2014	5	13
2,600	Photos from #carrythatweight protests. Sexual assault policy reformation is vital @NYMag http://thecut.io/1q59EfE	10/30/2014	0	0
3,840	Emma Sulkowicz Carries The Weight To Her #ColumbiaUniversity Graduation http://womenspost.ca/emma-sulkowicz-carries-the-weight-to-her-graduation/ #CarryThatWeight	5/20/2015	0	1

Based upon the widespread coverage of the narrative and its participation online, others attempted to capitalize off of the popularity of #CarryThatWeight by attempting to illuminate other sexual violence narratives. For example, @SurvJustice, a national non-profit providing legal assistance to survivors of sexual violence, attempted to grow

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attention for the story of a 16-year-old girl whose sexual assault went viral. The 16-year-old, who publicly identified herself following images and videos of her assault being shared online, reclaimed her name and narrative by creating the hashtag #IamJada (Matthews, 2014; Stewart, 2014). Jada would go on to state, "there's no point in hiding. Everybody has already seen my face and my body, but that's not what I am and who I am" (Stewart, 2014, para. 9). Though details of her assault would be shared virtually, the use of #IamJada and #JusticeforJada would be used to reclaim the narrative and challenge the use of social media as a space for survivors, not just as a space to shame them (Stewart, 2014).

To highlight their efforts, @SurvJustice would utilize the cross-hashtagging of #JusticeforJada and #IamJada in association with #CarryThatWeight; specifically, all the cross-postings would be shared on the Day of Action. @SurvJustice tweeted 205 times on October 29, 2014, in which they referenced either #JusticeforJada and/or #IamJada; in 97% of these tweets, @SurvJustice tagged politicians, reporters, activist groups, non-profits, and other prominent individuals. As was found in the textual analysis, the use of this cross-hashtag was found in 4.9% of all tweets in association with #CarryThatWeight. Interestingly, @SurvJustice would not participate further in #CarryThatWeight throughout its more than 2-year long lifespan.

#IStandWithJackie

In the November 19, 2014, edition of *Rolling Stone Magazine*, the accounts of a first-year student's brutal gang rape within a fraternity house at the University of Virginia (UVA) were detailed in "*A Rape on Campus"* (Rubin Erdely, 2014). "Jackie," a pseudonym, was an UVA student who alleges she experienced sexual assault by several

members of Phi Kappa Psi fraternity seeking full membership into the fraternal organization (Rubin Erdely, 2014). The account discusses the systematic plot of fraternity members to ensure Jackie's incapacitation whereby she could be sexually assaulted. The article depicts university administrators deterring Jackie from pursuing a formal complaint, highlighting a perceived culture of sexual violence and exploitation at UVA (Rubin Erdely, 2014).

However, on December 5, 2014, *Rolling Stone* would distance themselves from the narrative as scrutiny of the accounts of Jackie increased and redact the story completely in less than one month of its publishing (Yu, 2014). The magazine's managing editor stated, "In the face of new information, there now appear to be discrepancies in Jackie's account, and we have come to the conclusion that our trust in her was misplaced" (Yu, 2014, para. 2). This public retraction, however, would do little to sway public sentiment – a student's accounts of a violent gang rape in a seemingly safe collegiate environment were startling, and the magazine's handling of the narrative was questionable. #IStandWithJackie would emerge on social media where individuals would share their support for the UVA student (Worland, 2014).

Origin of #IStandWithJackie Hashtag. #IStandWithJackie first emerged on November 25, 2014, six days following the article's original publication, with the following statement "Jackie, you didn't make a bad decision by going to that party. #NotYourFault; their disgusting decision. #istandwithjackie" (tweet 1). The initial tweet would not receive any feedback from other Twitter users, no likes or retweets. It would not be until December 5, 2014, the day of Rolling Stone's official retraction, that the hashtag would grow in popularity. "Fuck RollingStone. #IStandWithJackie

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http://bit.ly/1Iakexa" (tweet 2) was the second tweet posted using #IStandWithJackie

receiving 17 likes and was retweeted 24 times.

#IStandWithJackie Quantitative Analysis. A total of 3,897 tweets were

publicly posted in association with #IStandWithJackie spanning November 25, 2014, to

November 18, 2016. A total of 1,348 participants contributed to the hashtag, averaging

2.89 tweets per user, over the course of 724 total calendar days. Of the 734 days in which

the hashtag is used, there are a total of 161 active dates; meaning that contributors

utilized #IStandWithJackie on 161 unique dates, or the hashtag was active 22.2% of all

dates across its 724-day lifespan. A total of 9,129 likes and 8,017 retweets were

documented, averaging 2.3 likes and 2.1 retweets per original post. A total of 867

hyperlinks were referenced within the 3,897 tweets, totaling 22.2% of all tweets posted.
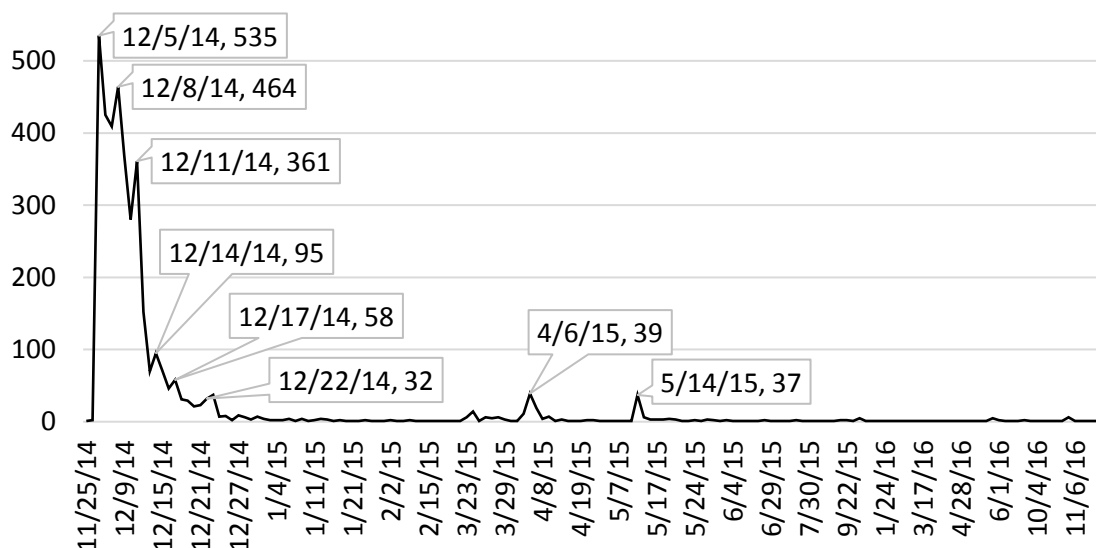
Figure 2: #IStandWithJackie Tweets by Date

The date of *Rolling Stone's* retraction was the most popular date for

#IStandWithJackie overall with 535 tweets posted. December 2014 was the most active

period for #IStandWithJackie as a total of 3,545 tweets were shared over the course of 26

active dates. Following a very busy December 2014, the next most popular month

impacting #IStandWithJackie's online narrative was the month in which the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism report was published (Coronel, Coll, & Kravitz, 2015). The April 2015 report would criticize Jackie's lack of response to attempts from Rubin Erdely to clarify inconsistencies in her recollections of her assault (Coronel, Coll, & Kravitz, 2015). Further, the report highlighted Jackie's reluctance to identify a central figure in her assault until after *A Rape on Campus* was published (Coronel, Coll, & Kravitz, 2015). It was at the time of the identity disclosure that Rubin Erdely would begin to express concerns in the veracity of Jackie's assault to her senior editors, in which a more formal distancing from Jackie by *Rolling Stone Magazine* would begin (Coronel, Coll, & Kravitz, 2015). Aspects of the report would cause Twitter users to express their concerns for what was interpreted as victim blaming by the report's authors.

The most liked tweet associated with #IStandWithJackie would qualify as a "trolling" comment. Liked 128 times, and retweeted 102 times, was the statement "There are lies, damn lies, & feminism. #GamerGate #StopGamerGate #UVAHoax #UVARapeHoax #YesAllwomen #IStandWithJackie" (tweet 3,440) was posted December 21, 2014. The most retweeted tweet associated with #IStandWithJackie was posted on its second date, December 5, 2014, and would be shared 132 times and receive 62 likes; "Even if you remember your assault perfectly+recount it the exact same way each time you say it, they'll say it's rehearsed #IStandWithJackie" (tweet 213). The second most liked and second most retweeted post, however, underscores the contentious nature of this hashtag. "The Rolling Stone rape story wasn't a hoax, because Titanic!

#IStandWithJackie" was posted December 6, 2014 garnering 109 likes and was retweeted

128 times (tweet 873).

Table 6

Most Popular Tweets Associated with #IStandWithJackie

Tweet Number	Tweet	Date	Likes	Retweets
213	Even if you remember your assault perfectly+recount it the exact same way each time you say it, they'll say it's rehearsed #IStandWithJackie	12/5/2014	62	132
873	The Rolling Stone rape story wasn't a hoax, because Titanic! #IStandWithJackie	12/6/2014	109	128
3440	There are lies, damn lies, & feminism. #GamerGate #StopGamerGate #UVAHoax #UVARapeHoax #YesAllWomen #IStandWithJackie	12/21/2014	128	102

Examination of the most commonly used phrases reveals that the term "rape" was

referenced 1,086 times, appearing in 27.9% of all tweets posted in association with

#IStandWithJackie. The second most commonly occurring term would be "http,"

referencing the use of a hyperlink within the tweet, appearing 867 times, 22.2%. The next

most popular phrase would be a sub-hashtag, or a hashtag generated via the inspiration of

the originating hashtag; #UVAHoax was referenced 512 times, appearing in 12.5% of all

tweets posted in association with #IStandWithJackie. Further analysis would find the

following terms to be used regularly throughout the hashtag's discourse: "false" used 176

times, "lie" used 107 times, 2.7%, and "hoax" used 95 times, 2.4%. Additional sub-

hashtags identified include #AntiSJW, where "SJW" is shorthand for the pejorative

phrase "social justice warrior," and #WomenAgainstFeminism were both used 128 times,

3.3%.

Table 7

Most Popular Terms Associated with #IStandWithJackie

Term	Count	Frequency
rape	1,086	27.9%
http	867	22.2%
#UVAhoax	512	13.1%
com	487	12.5%
Jackie	411	10.5%
rolling	397	10.2%
stone	375	9.6%
story	363	9.3%
UVA	341	8.8%
www	304	7.8%

Startlingly, though Jackie's identity was never publicly identified in Rubin-Erdely's article, Jackie's full name would be unearthed and shared via social media. Though her last name will be withheld from this manuscript to protect her identity, it would be referenced in association with #IStandWithJackie 24 times. "[Full Name Redacted] raped me, now everyone in the media get angry and start attacking her because I said so #IStandWithJackie #feminism" (tweet 1356). "If you weren't traumatized enough to go to the police immediately, you weren't raped! #IStandwithJackie Fuck [Full Name Redacted]" (tweet 1724).

#IStandWithJackie Qualitative Analysis. Open coding of every 10th tweet shared in association with #IStandWithJackie was performed, with a total of 389 tweets coded (α 0.87). Eleven total nodes were identified through the coding process, as described in the table below, seven of which were used within #CarryThatWeight.

Table 8

Alpha Calculations with #IStandWithJackie Nodes

Node Name	Node Description	Prevalence	α
Survivor Support	Tweet expresses affirmation and support directly for Jackie	26.1%	0.81
Negating Narrative	Tweet provides evidence or an opinion that counters the narrative of Jackie	11.4%	0.85
Trolling Comment	Tweet is harassing in nature, including the use of abusive language	22.2%	0.84
Personal Disclosure	Author of the tweet shares their own experience with sexual violence	1.7%	0.91
Addresses University of Virginia	Tweet references University of Virginia	3.7%	0.81
Addresses Rolling Stone	Tweet references *Rolling Stone Magazine*	13.4%	0.93
Addresses Frat Culture	Tweet references Phi Kappa Pi and/or culture of fraternal organizations	3.7%	0.88
Fear of Impact	Tweet references the author's fears surrounding the article's retraction	4.9%	0.84
Highlighting Hashtag	Tweet highlights the nature of the hashtag in reference to its subject or role on social media	1.5%	0.85
Hashtivism	Tweet discusses a call to action, including discussing the contributors action in reference to the hashtag or the action of others in reference to the hashtag	4.2%	0.88
URL	Tweet includes a web link	26.0%	0.99

Analysis revealed that 26.1% of tweets expressed direct support for Jackie, including "Put Jackie's rapists on trial, not Jackie #IStandWithJackie #IBelieveJackie" (tweet 2,020). However, this analysis also found that more than one of out of every five tweets (22.2%) of tweets were designated as a "trolling" comment, the highest rate of trolling comments for any of the three hashtags investigated for this study. For example, tweet 2,600 states "If you [sic] ever going to have sex with a woman who tweets

#IStandWithJackie for your own security, make a sextape." Further, 11.4% of tweets

were found to negate Jackie's narrative directly. "If Jackie's story is true, then there

should be MULTIPLE witnesses who saw her leaving the party covered in

blood.barefoot.#IStandWithJackie" (tweet 1,570).

Though initially used in an attempt to show solidarity with Jackie, the hashtag

quickly became a place in which conversation turned from support to opposition (see

Table 9). The first tweet referencing concerns in the accuracy of Jackie's accounts within

the article were shared early within the #IStandWithJackie lifespan. "2 things here: 1)

frats do not always keep records of their parties. 2) @RollingStone should have spoken to

the rapists" (tweet 7). Other users would similarly share their doubts in Jackie's narrative

of gang rape. #IStandWithJackie is the most combative and controversial of the three

identified for this research study, paralleling public sentiments regarding Jackie's trauma

in light of *Rolling Stone*'s distancing of her narrative. #UVAHoax was the most common

hashtag used within the #IStandWithJackie narrative.

Table 9

Examples of Sampled Tweets Denouncing Jackie and/or Trolling #IStandWithJackie

Tweet Number	Tweet	Date	Likes	Retweets
930	So apparently, we must automatically believe rape claims. There goes #justice & #equality #IStandWithJackie http://www.washingtonpost.com/postevery thing/wp/2014/12/06/no-matter-what-jackie-said-we-should-automatically-believe-rape-claims/ …	12/6/2014	0	0
1,720	Those who make false rape accusations should be registered sex offenders same as child molesters/rapists. Cunts #IStandWithJackie	12/8/2014	0	0
2,060	If #IStandWithJackie's story is proven all fake, would u continue to support her? isn't it disrespectful to real #rapesurvivors? and #men?	12/9/2014	1	0
3,220	#RapeCultureIsWhen .006% of college women are raped, but you say 20% anyway. #OneInFive #IStandWithJackie #UVAHoax	12/15/2014	10	9

The hostility towards Jackie would come to a head when she would be publicly identified, or "doxxed" a term used to describe this act by her full name and photograph via Twitter by Chuck C. Johnson, @ChuckCJohnson (Parkin, 2016). On December 8, 2014, Chuck Johnson, an editor and journalist for a for-profit news site, posted "Jackie [Last Name Redacted] has until midnight tonight to tell the truth about making it up. #IStandWithJackie" (McCoy, 2014). In addition, on December 13, 2014, a user looked up the name on Classmates.com to find additional identifying information of "Jackie," including her full name, a photograph, her high school, and high school graduation year, sharing the information online. In attempting to capture the original tweet by Johnson

naming Jackie, it was found that the Twitter account is suspended. (Note: There are two accounts using "ChuckCJohnson" which appear to be parody accounts.) Four of the tweets captured for this research study included retweets of Johnson's original post. Those that retweeted Johnson's post included comments in their posts including "Wow. Deeply troubling." (post 1,189); "#ThisIsCalledExtortion" (post ,1129); "fuck u and ur ultimatum" (post 1,151).

As reported by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Johnson's doxxing of Jackie's full identity became its own Twitter hashtag, posted 2,000 times by December 11, 2014, while #UVAHoax was used more than 6,000 times (Zurcher, 2014). Review of the users posting Jackie's name were found to be largely male (70%) (Zurcher, 2014). Conversely, the users associated with #IStandWithJackie were identified as female, 59% (Zurcher, 2014). The gender analysis was documented 17 days after the hashtags original post. In regards to this research study, it was found that Jackie's full name was used 24 times in association with the #IStandWithJackie, including 8 times in which her full name is embedded within a shared hyperlink.

Some survivors openly expressed their own concerns in being met with disbelief like Jackie. "One reason I never tell the press my full story: I know folks will spend more time picking it apart than demanding change #IStandWithJackie" (tweet 34) posted by @danabolger, co-founder of KnowYourIX (About KYIX, 2017). Several other users would underscore their fears that *Rolling Stone Magazine*'s retraction would promote victim blaming and inhibit reporting of sexual assaults as a consequence. Coding results indicate 4.9% of posts expressed fear of the impact of the public retraction of Jackie's narrative. "Dear @RollingStone, it's b/c of statements like this that more survivors don't

come forward: http://www.donotlink.com/framed?596527 #IStandWithJackie" (tweet

130).

Table 10

Examples of Tweets Raising Concerns About Victim Blaming with #IStandWithJackie

Tweet Number	Tweet	Date	Likes	Retweets
40	you know how many gross white boys at frats across the country are going to throw vindication parties at their frats now? #IStandWithJackie	12/5/2014	13	4
70	Banner week for victim-blaming. #IStandWithJackie	12/5/2014	21	18
350	I'm absolutely disgusted by @RollingStone's behavior. There's a reason rape is so underreported, and this is it. #IStandWithJackie	12/5/2014	6	11
1,200	Yeah, I'm never reading Rolling Stone again. Way to show rape victims not to speak up.	12/7/2014	0	0

Through the course of online dialogue, #IStandWithJackie and hashtags

associated with the Black Lives Matter movement converged in late 2014. On July 17,

2014, Eric Garner died following his arrest by the New York City Police Department

(Baker, Goodman, & Mueller, 2015). Video footage of Garner stating "I can't breathe"

while in a chokehold by an officer went viral, contributing to continued national

conversations on the use of force by law enforcement and concerns regarding systemic

racism within the justice system (Baker, Goodman, & Mueller, 2015). On December 3,

2014, a grand jury decided not to indict the officer who was viewed choking Garner in

the widely-shared footage (Baker, Goodman, & Mueller, 2015). Following the decision,

hashtags including #BlackLivesMatter, #EricGarner, and #ICantBreathe were trending

online while protests were staged in New York City, San Francisco, Washington, DC,

Baltimore, Atlanta, and Chicago (deHahn, 2014; Flores, 2015; Southall, 2014). With

Rolling Stone's retraction following the grand jury decision regarding Garner's death,

many individuals concerned with social justice topics took to various social media outlets

to express their outrage and concern.

Table 11

Examples of Tweets Paralleling Racism and Sexism with #IStandWithJackie

Tweet Number	Tweet	Date	Likes	Retweets
8	What a horrible week. I've had it with the world. #BlackLivesMatter #IStandWithJackie	12/5/2014	1	0
65	I don't have the words for how I'm feeling right now. My faith in humanity is quickly dwindling. #IStandWithJackie #BlackLivesMatter	12/5/2014	0	0
246	Horrified that repugnant racism and misogyny seem to be mainstream among UVA student body. #ICantBreathe #IStandWithJackie	12/5/2014	3	1
247	If it ain't clear #IStandWithJackie #BlackLivesMatter #ICantBreathe #EricGarner	12/5/2014	1	1
836	I'm weird in that I don't blame victims of rape or murder for contributing to their own rape or murder. #IStandWithJackie #ICantBreathe	12/6/2015	25	18

#SurvivingCostMe

Following popularized media accounts of sexual violence in college, including

Columbia's Emma and UVA's Jackie, stories documenting the costs associated with

sexual violence emerged online with #SurvivingCostMe. These narratives highlight the

financial, academic, psychological, and physical impact of sexual violence upon

survivors in college (Kingkade, 2014b). This hashtag, unlike #CarryThatWeight and

#IStandWithJackie is not associated with any one narrative of sexual violence, but instead provides a forum in which others can share their own experience as survivors.

Origin of #SurvivingCostMe Hashtag. On November 24, 2014, @HuffPostCollege, the Twitter account for *The Huffington Post*'s college newsroom, published the following tweet: "So we want to invite survivors to speak in their own words, through a photo or a tweet, what #survivingcostme." @HuffPostCollege elaborated in their next tweet that their invitation sought to provide a digital space in which survivors could "shed light" on their experiences post trauma. The initial tweet received 9 likes and was retweeted 16 times. The second explanatory tweet received 5 tweets and was retweeted 18 times.

#SurvivingCostMe Quantitative Analysis. A total of 133 tweets were publicly posted in association with #SurvivingCostMe spanning November 24, 2014, to September 17, 2015 A total of 59 participants contributed to the hashtag, averaging 2.25 tweets per user, over the course of 297 total calendar days. Of the 297 days in which the hashtag is used, there are a total of 13 active dates; meaning that contributors utilized #SurvivingCostMe on 13 unique dates, or the hashtag was active 2.25% of all dates across its 297-day lifespan. On more than half of these dates (53%), just one tweet was posted. A total of 340 likes and 361 retweets were documented, averaging 2.5 likes and 2.7 retweets per original post. A total of 10 hyperlinks were referenced within the 133 tweets, totaling 7.5% of all tweets posted.
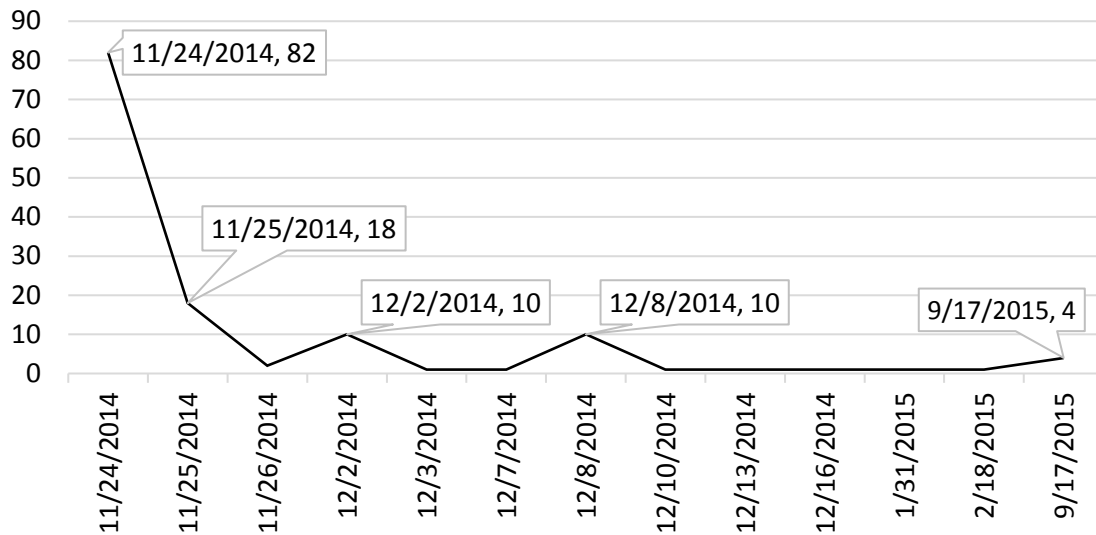
Figure 3: #SurvivingCostMe Tweets by Date

The tweet that elicited the most positive response referenced how the struggles regarding racial disparity parallels the struggle of sexual violence survivors. "& #fergusondecision makes me think about the deep, dangerous consequences of institutional neglect & betrayal," (post 88) posted on November 25, 2014, was liked 23 times. An additional tweet posted by originator @HuffPostCollege was retweeted the most out of all 133 contributing tweets on November 24, 2014. "As @azbroadsky explained in this piece: wapo.st/1rkCg56 #survivingcostme https://pbs.twimg.com/media/B3POu0FCYAEKtH2.png:large" (tweet 13). The message included an image of an excerpt from a *The Washington Post* article entitled "How much does sexual assault cost college students every year?" (Brodsky, 2014).

Another example is a friend of mine I'll call Allison, who was told by her small northeastern college, in the middle of the fall 2011 semester, that she should leave campus until her abuser had graduated and return when it was safe to do so. This is a clear violation of Title IX, which requires schools to remove dangerous students and work with survivors to continue their educations. In the end, the evidence against her assailant proved strong enough to prompt him to withdraw before the school could expel him, but Allison was denied a refund on her tuition for her own lost semester. This is essentially a $19,000 fine for victimhood.

Figure 4: Financial loss sustained by one sexual violence survivor.

Alexandra Brodsky authored the piece highlighting the financial impact of sexual violence for college students (Brodsky, 2014). Though Brodsky's article is not directly related to #SurvivingCostMe, and though Brodsky did not directly contribute to the hashtag, @HuffPostCollege referenced her article in an attempt to solicit survivor narratives. Brodsky is the co-founder of KnowYourIX, a national non-profit that seeks to put information regarding Title IX and other civil rights in the hands of college students (About KYIX, 2017; Brodsky, 2014). In having 5,279 followers on Twitter, a contribution from the activist could have furthered the reach of #SurvivingCostMe. However, Brodsky is not one of the 59 Twitter users associated with the hashtag.

Table 12

Most Popular Tweets Associated with #SurvivingCostMe

Tweet Number	Tweet	Date	Likes	Retweets
88	#survivingcostme & #furgesondecision makes me think about the deep, dangerous consequences of institutional neglect & betrayal	11/25/2014	23	21
38	#survivingcostme trust. Hearing rape jokes and apologism are no longer just annoying and sad, but threatening.	11/24/2014	21	18
13	As @azbroadsky explained in this piece: wapo.st/1rkCg56 #survivingcostme https://pbs.twimg.com/media/B3POu0FCYA EKtH2.png:large	11/24/2014	18	23
109	Survivors Share Some Of The Hidden Costs of Sexual Assault in College #survivingcostme (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/02/s urvivingcostme_n_6245004.html?utm_hp_ref =breakingthesilence)	12/2//2014	5	23

Examination of the most commonly used phrases reveals that the term "self" was referenced 13 times, appearing in 9.8% of all tweets posted in association with #SurvivingCostMe. The second most commonly occurring phrases, each appearing 12

times, or 9.0% in all tweets, are "ability," "assault," "school," and "trust." No sub-hashtags or cross-hashtags were found. However, several campuses were tagged, including University of Wisconsin at Madison (@UWMadison), 4 times, 3.0%, Pace University (@Pace), and Virginia Commonwealth University (@VCU), each referenced 3 times, 2.3%.

Table 13

Most Popular Terms in Association with #SurvivingCostMe

Term	Count	Frequency
self	13	9.8%
ability	12	9.0%
assault	12	9.0%
school	12	9.0%
trust	12	9.0%
@huffpostcollege	11	8.3%
sexual	11	8.3%
survivors	11	8.3%
worth	11	8.3%
college	10	7.5%

#SurvivingCostMe Qualitative Analysis. Open coding of every 10th tweet shared in association with #SurvivingCostMe was performed, with a total of 13 tweets coded (α 1.0). Four total nodes were intended for use through the coding process, but data were only relevant for two specific nodes, Personal Disclosure and URL (see Table 14).

Table 14

Alpha Calculations for #SurvivingCostMe Nodes

Node Name	Node Description	Prevalence	α
Trolling Comment	Tweet is harassing in nature, including the use of abusive language	0%	1.0
Personal Disclosure	Author of the tweet shares their own experience with sexual violence	84.6%	1.0
Highlighting Hashtag	Tweet highlights the nature of the hashtag in reference to its subject or role on social media	0%	1.0
Hashtivism	Tweet discusses a call to action, including discussing the contributors action in reference to the hashtag or the action of others in reference to the hashtag	0%	1.0
URL	Tweet includes a web link	15.4%	1.0

Through coding, it was determined that 85% of tweets included a personal disclosure by the contributor. Such disclosures include "After rape at @UWMadison #survivingcostme my home as I will never feel comfortable living in Madison again where I was born and raised" (tweet 20) and "#survivingcostme the ability to go through fall without becoming depressed thanks to so many trauma anniversaries" (tweet 90).

Table 15

Examples of Sampled Tweets Sharing Survivorship with #SurvivingCostMe

Tweet Number	Tweet	Date	Likes	Retweets
10	#survivingcostme a good night's sleep	11/24/2014	1	0
30	I want to leave school but my parents won't let me. Every day here I'm miserable and scared of another assault. #survivingcostme	11/24/2013	2	1
60	#survivingcostme more sleepless hours than I can count	11/24/2014	1	0
100	#survivingcostme the desire to live	11/25/2014	1	1

Several of the contributing tweets sampled for analysis highlight the ongoing plight of survivorship – losing close relationships, a feeling of security, and trying to sustain one's self as an academic while enrolled in college. "#survivingcostme my education, friends, self-worth, and mental health. Being a survivor of sexual assault makes you wish you were dead" (tweet 120). A poignant tweet by an unidentified contributor on November 24, 2014, speaks to the alleviation that disclosing one's trauma, "#survivingcostme, but silence would have killed me" (tweet 70).

In review of all tweets posted, one contributor to #SurvivingCostMe shared their account of surviving gang rape while attending Pace University. The contributor, whose identity is being withheld for privacy reasons, shared in a 21-tweet narrative the cost of college sexual violence.

Table 16

Excerpts of a Contributor's Personal Disclosure with #SurvivingCostMe

Tweet Number	Tweet	Date	Likes	Retweets
3	#survivingcostme leaving Pace, applying to another school, retaking 2 intro art classes, having panic attacked almost every day at school…	11/24/2014	0	0
6	#survivingcostme having to seek out a specialist because my depression and PTSD are so severe that I do not respond to medication.	11/24/2013	0	0
46	#survivingcostme the capability of feeling safe. I'm not safe on the streets, my apartment or house, my room, or even from myself.	11/24/2014	2	2
130	#survivingcostme a semester's worth of tuition money I can't get back.	9/17/2015	0	0

The contributor was the first participant to post using the #SurvivingCostMe hashtag following @HuffPostCollege's invitations. This user's tweets would span the entirety of

the hashtag's lifespan on Twitter, being the first and last individual to publicly post in which they would receive a total of 22 likes (averaging 0.95 likes per post) and would be retweeted 17 times (averaging 0.81 retweets per post).

Thematically, this contributor touched on each of the core areas of impact caused by college sexual assault: academic impact, financial impact, psychological impact, and relational impact (Bolger, 2016). Of the 59 total hashtag participants, 12% of total contributors, including the aforementioned contributor, would share experiences in which the four areas of impact are highlighted over the course of 11.1 tweets, on average. The most succinct post in which the totality of damage caused by sexual violence posted on December 3, 2014, states "#survivingcostme a year's worth of tuition for a failing GPA, friendships, self-confidence, the price of a private psychiatrist, my health" (tweet 113). This tweet would receive two likes but would not be retweeted.

Most frequently, however, self-identified survivors shared thing experiences of negative psychological effects from their trauma. Such disclosures include "having panic attacks daily at school" and lacking "the capability of feeling safe." Several survivors shared their struggles with suicidal ideation, self-harm, and disordered eating. Though the act of sexual assault is in and of itself a physically violent act, the emotional damage caused far outlasts any physical scars. In a tweet posted November 24, 2014, a contributor stated "#survivingcostme my identity. I'm not Sara, I'm Sara who was raped" (tweet 29), highlighting the loss of identity sustained by survivors who become forever associated with their trauma.

On December 2, 2014, *The Huffington Post* shared an article regarding some of the stories shared via #SurvivingCostMe (Kingkade, 2014b). In light of UVA's Jackie

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sharing the impact of her sexual assault upon her life, Kingkade (2014b) highlights the often-unanticipated consequences of surviving sexual violence. The article featured nine tweets, seven of which the contributing author's image was not included (Kingkade, 2014b). Though the hashtag attracted various contributions, the article itself failed to cite peer-reviewed research on the psychological and physiological impact of trauma (Kingkade, 2014b).

Interestingly, of the tweets sampled for open coding, zero trolling comments or negating narrative tweets were identified. Out of the three hashtags investigated for this study, #SurvivingCostMe is the only hashtag that did not illicit feedback, contributions, or counter narratives from other Twitter users.

Conclusion

#CarryThatWeight engaged the most total users and received the most total tweets with 2,119 unique users to sharing 4,172 tweets over the longest lifespan, 291 active dates. #CarryThatWeight received 1.96 tweets per user, receiving 3.9 likes and 3.0 retweets per post. #IStandWithJackie engaged the second-highest quantity of total users and second-highest amount of total tweets with 1,348 unique users sharing 3,897 tweets over 161 active dates. #IStandWithJackie received the highest number of tweets per user, 2.89 tweets, but received the lowest number of likes and retweets per post, 2.3 and 2.1 respectively. However, #SurvivingCostMe engaged only 59 unique users to share 133 tweets over 13 active dates. Though the total number of participants and active dates in which the hashtag were sustained is significantly less than the aforementioned hashtags, #SurvivingCostMe did illicit respectable participation of their contributors, averaging

2.25 tweets per user, receiving 2.5 likes and 2.7 retweets per post – the second-highest

total of tweets per users, likes per post, and retweets per post.

Chapter Five – Conclusions and Implications

The fall of 2014 was busy for hashtivism associated with sexual violence in higher education (Gordon, 2014). In combining the hashtags investigated in this research study, there is considerable participation in the fall of 2014 from when each hashtag debuted. In September (#CarryThatWeight) and November (#SurvivingCostMe and #IStandWithJackie), a considerable act of hashtivism occurred as well as in October (National Day of Action), and when public sentiment regarding a public retraction occurred in December (*Rolling Stone*'s retraction). It is evident through documenting participation along a timeline that a hashtag's initial unveiling online has an impact upon active participation as does a widely-publicized event occurring outside of social media. However, though Sulkowicz's performance art spanned an entire academic year, including her carrying a mattress across her graduation stage, the hashtag saw less participation as its lifespan continued. As #CarryThatWeight lost momentum after its National Day of Action, the movement as a whole gained traction as #SurvivingCostMe and #IStandWithJackie were born.
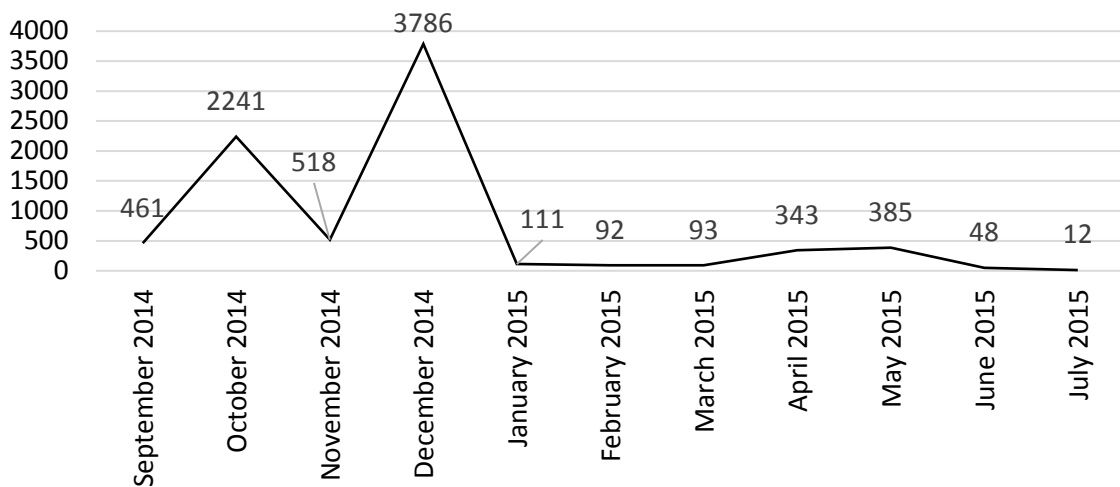

Figure 5: Tweets Associated with #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe Over Time

The parallels among the three aforementioned hashtags begin with their emergence within eight-weeks of each other in late 2014. As documented in this research, 2014 was a pivotal year for challenging the dominant narrative of sexual violence in higher education. Each narrative associated with #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and with #SurvivingCostMe brings to light an otherwise silenced narrative – the plight of survivorship. Often, accounts of sexual violence in college are limited to the assault and immediate aftermath. Emma, Jackie, and the individual survivors who contributed to #SurvivingCostMe chronicled their efforts to overcome the physical, psychological, academic, and social damage caused by their trauma. These narratives show the varying ways in which survivors seek to manage their experiences as well; some reported their assaults, some did not; some left their universities, some did not; some disclosed to their friends and family, some did not; some sought to become activists, other sought to survive. Each hashtag documents a silenced narrative of sexual violence. This use of social media to amplify a story otherwise muted or deemed taboo is the strongest parallel each of the hashtags share. #CarryThatWeight and #IStandWithJackie highlight the stories of specific survivors while #SurvivingCostMe provides a space in which users are able to disclose their experiences with sexual trauma.

Further, at least 15% of all posts includes the use of a web link. Analysis found that 50.0% of #CarryThatWeight tweets, 26.0% of #IStandWithJackie tweets, and 15.4% of #SurvivingCostMe tweets contained a URL. Though this research cannot speculate as to the frequency of which social media users share hyperlinked content, it is noteworthy that one out of every seven posts includes a URL. Some links shared reference mainstream media coverage of the contributing narrative, including Emma's interview

with *Time Magazine* or Jackie's interview with *Rolling Stone.* Other links provided

access to lesser-known infotainment blogs where authors provide commentary regarding

the nuances of sexual violence, rape culture, and college life. "Columbia Students Rally

to #CarryThatWeight Together http://other98.com/columbia-students-rally-

carrythatweight-together/ via @@other98) (tweet 190); "SJWs defend vandalization of

the frat house, they are a lynchmob

http:www.collegiatetimes.com/opinion/article_7c5c5190-7b52-11e4-8a37-

7bb48216f714.html … #IStandWithJackie #UVAHoax" (tweet 1,490). In addition, others

provided links that document intimate details about quasi-public survivors, such as

Jackie's full name and photograph. "@[name redacted] Oh by the way: Here new facts :

http://gotnews.com/breaking-fraud-jackie[Last Name Redacted]-cried-rape-UVAhoax/ …

#IStandWithJackie ? #Iprovefactsfirst" (tweet 1,770); "8 more notorious false rape claims

http://dailycaller.com/2014/12/14/here-are-eight-campus-rape-hoaxes-eerily-like-the-

UVA-rape-story/ #LenaDunham #UVAHoax #IStandWithJackie #stoprush #feminism"

(tweet 3,240).

However, there are distinctions to #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and

#SurvivingCostMe that provide each a unique identity online. #CarryThatWeight and

#IStandWithJackie brought about conversation for thousands of Twitter users spanning

hundreds of days online, affording the hashtags official trending status, though users

engaged with each hashtag differently. #CarryThatWeight sparked hashtivism for its

users while #IStandWithJackie attracted heated commentary and trolling comments.

Differently, #SurvivingCostMe was not as widely used on Twitter and had the shortest

lifespan, though it had the most intimate of personal disclosures documented.

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Central survivors highlighted within each hashtag received both support and criticism online. Each hashtag achieved trending status on Twitter.

#CarryThatWeight
Highlights Hashtivism

Hashtags highlight the psychological and emotional toll associated with surviving sexual violence.

#IStandWithJackie
Attracts Trolls

#SurvivingCostMe
Promotes Personal Disclosures

Hashtags attracted contributors who revealed their fears in sharing their trauma, including concerns for experiencing victim blaming.

Figure 6: Visual Representation of the Similarities and Differences in #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe

The three theoretical frameworks guiding this research overlap in that they discuss the exploitation of power and the harm it causes to subordinate groups – robbing them of their voice and discrediting their experiences. Prilleltensky's (2003) Psychopolitical Validity Theory (PPV) speaks to a process of liberation by marginalized groups through collective action. Feminist communication theory highlights power imbalances in language and public discourse while muted group theory describes the silencing of subordinate groups as a result of such inequity (Kramarae, 1981; Wood, 2005).

Politically superior groups exploit power structures (i.e. the media) to maintain control over subordinate groups. The process of liberation requires marginalized groups to challenge dominating messages via commonly accessed communication medium.

Language serves the majority. Due to a lack of power, marginalized groups lack a voice that is acknowledged. The process of liberation requires a unification of those voices, forming a more cohesive community through which paralleling messages can be transmitted.

Psychopolitical Validity Theory

Collective action by exploited or marginalized groups leads towards liberation

Feminist Communication Theory

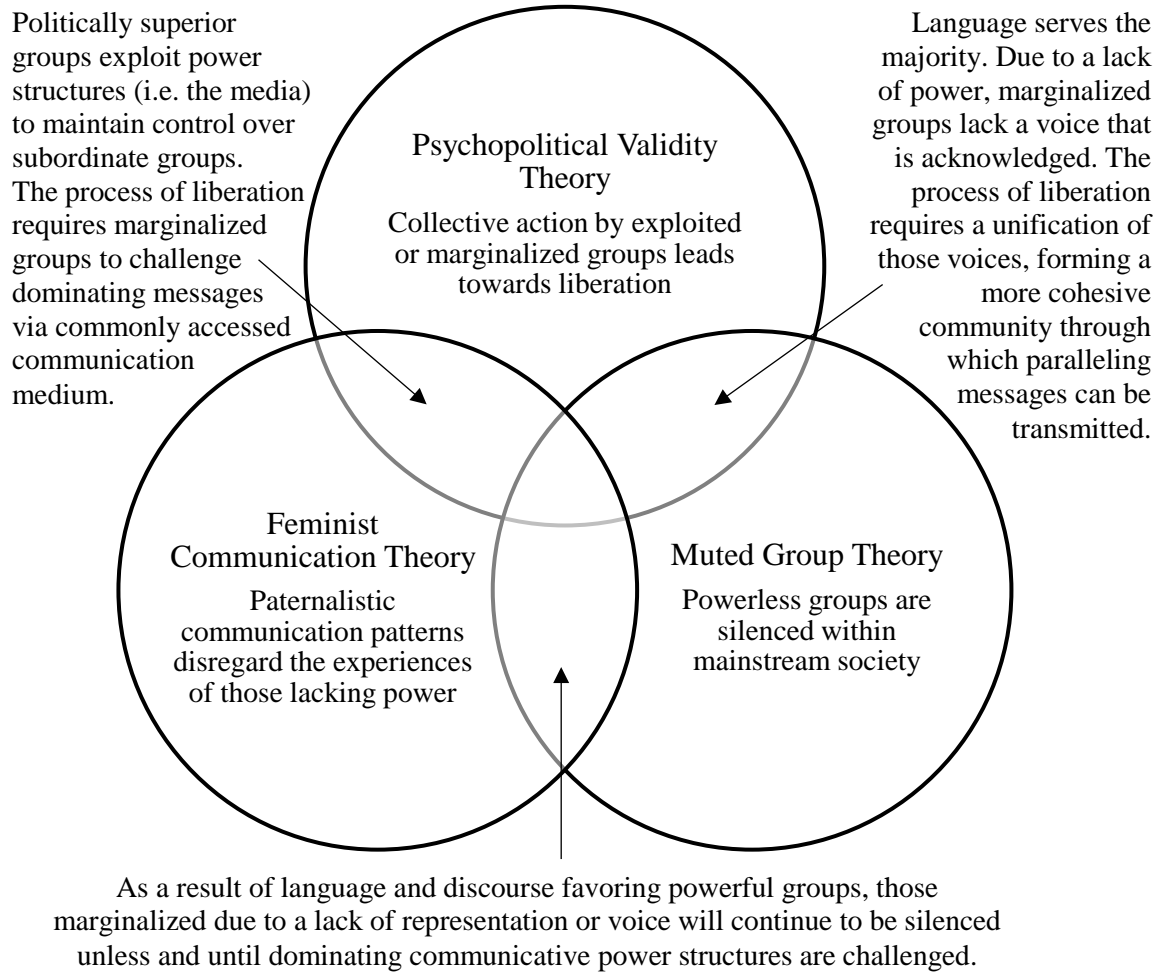Paternalistic communication patterns disregard the experiences of those lacking power

Muted Group Theory

Powerless groups are silenced within mainstream society

As a result of language and discourse favoring powerful groups, those marginalized due to a lack of representation or voice will continue to be silenced unless and until dominating communicative power structures are challenged.

Figure 7: Visual Representation of the Similarities and Differences in Psychopolitical Validity Theory, Feminist Communication Theory, and Muted Group Theory

Each hashtag sought to amplify the marginalized voice and experience of sexual violence survivors, pushing against the sociological factors that mute their narratives. In providing details regarding their trauma, each hashtag spoke out against the cultural phenomenon that place blame for sexual violence at the feet of the survivors. #CarryThatWeight and #IStandWithJackie describe the struggles of their central survivors of experiencing sexual violence by a trusted acquaintance while #SurvivingCostMe draws attention to the toll of sexual trauma. Through utilizing Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) to provide a forum for more open dialogue, the hashtags demonstrate the value of a collective,

unified front to challenge paternalistic cultural norms while also documenting the potential for harms as a part of this process (i.e. being the target for harassment by online trolls).

Conclusions

Through this research, I am seeking to determine what factors illicit active participation and contribute to its longevity and impact online. Further, I am attempting to determine the impact, if any, of any counter narratives to participation. Careful review of the data obtained for this research finds that three emerging elements have a positive effect upon participation and a robust lifespan online: firstly, the ability of others to be able to absorb a powerful narrative by an individual that is fully or partially identifiable; second, sustained media coverage and attention towards the hashtag causes users to contribute to online conversations and the sharing of hyperlinks; and finally, the ability of the hashtag to engage users in hashtivism online and in real life engages users to continue to contribute to the hashtag.

A Publicly Identifiable Narrative. Examination of the three hashtags reveals that the most public of the survivors, Emma and Jackie, have the most popular hashtag in terms of having the most tweets per user, the most contributors, and the longest amount of active dates on Twitter. However, these two publicly identifiable survivors elicited very different reactions to their narratives online.

#CarryThatWeight's Sulkowicz proves to be a desirable representative of survivorship due to her work to report her assault and hold her assailant accountable for his behavior. As previously highlighted, reporting rates of sexual assault are markedly low; Sulkowicz not only reported her assault to Columbia University, she also reported

the incident to local law enforcement (Bolger, 2014; Sulkowicz, 2014). Further, she joined others in reporting their concerns regarding Columbia University's handlings of reports of sexual violence to the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) (Pérez-Peña, 2014). Sulkowicz furthered her association as a rape survivor turned activist through her performance art piece her senior year. "Every day, I am afraid to leave my room. Even seeing people who look remotely like my rapist scares me…As long as he's on campus with me, he can continue to harass me" (Sulkowicz, 2014. Para. 5). Sulkowicz explained her senior thesis was designed to bring attention to what is often ignored – the weight of survivorship (Barness, 2013). "The past year or so of my life has been really marked by telling people what happened in that most intimate private space and bringing it out into the light (Barness, 2013, para. 4).

Sulkowicz's thesis would be identified as a pivotal act in raising awareness to sexual violence within higher education. *Al Jazeera America* would publish an article maintaining Sulkowicz's *Carry That Weight* would push rape advocacy from "vigils" to "defiant acts and media-savvy campaigns" (Gordon, 2014, para. 17). Within weeks of her work to raise awareness, *Ms. Magazine* would bestow its Wonder Award to Sulkowicz (Feminist Newswire, 2014). Sulkowicz would later receive the 2016 Woman of Courage Award from the National Organization for Women based upon her activism (Palella, 2016). Sulkowicz became familiar with several high-profile individuals, including U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, through which she was invited to attend the 2015 State of the Union (Davis, 2015; French, 2015). Further analysis of the top five most liked tweets found that each contributor was a national figure or organization – @ladygaga, @chronicle, @NOMOREorg, the Twitter account for the national non-profit

of the same name, and @SenGillibrand, the validated Twitter account for Senator Kirsten Gillibrand of New York. However, qualitative analysis of sampled tweets found that only 13.4% of tweets shared support for Sulkowicz directly.

#IStandWithJackie's central survivor Jackie received more tweets of support of sampled posts than Sulkowicz, 26.1% of all tweets sampled. However, tweets posted in association with #IStandWithJackie were also found to have more active participation from trolls on nearly a 1:1 ratio with supportive tweets. Examples of harassing tweets include "To think…#[Full Name Redacted] made up that ENTIRE violent explicit erotic rape fantasy in her mind. What a creepy pervert. #IStandWithJackie" (tweet 3,030) and "God knows how many men were destroyed throughout history by lying bitches & white knights #IStandWithJackie" (tweet 2,500). It is likely due to the controversial and divisive nature of this hashtag that it brought about more tweets per user than #CarryThatWeight or #SurvivingCostMe, as contributors sought to underscore their arguments to the opposition.

The sole hashtag not affiliated with any individual's narrative, #SurvivingCostMe, had the shortest lifespan and the least number of active participants. Though @HuffPostCollege sought to provide a space in which survivors could share their narratives regarding their trauma, the hashtag itself failed to reach a broad audience. This lead me to question if having an open-ended hashtag through which individual narratives can be shared translates into less participation for sexual assault survivors. However, research finds that other open-ended hashtags have found success in eliciting personal narratives. #NotOkay, for example, became a space for personal disclosure, finding success as a trending hashtag and, later, as a news story (Hickson, 2016; Lekakis,

2016). A critical difference, however, is that #NotOkay was born from a widely

publicized media event featuring the lewd comments of a presidential candidate

(Hickson, 2016; Lekakis, 2016).

Media Coverage. Of the three hashtags analyzed for this research study,

#CarryThatWeight was covered by more media outlets and discussed by a larger

audience online. Sulkowicz shared her narrative with several media outlets throughout

her academic year-long hashtivism art thesis, including penning her own experience in

Time Magazine at the dawn of her thesis (Sulkowicz, 2014). With the two hashtags with

the longest lifespan and most contributors having a substantial amount of media

coverage, it is my opinion that media attention contributes positively to a hashtag's

success.

Of tweets analyzed, half of all tweets in regards to #CarryThatWeight, included

hyperlinks. Just over one-fourth of #IStandWithJackie's sampled tweets included a

hyperlink. However, #SurvivingCostMe included just 10 out of its 133 total posts.

Analysis of the web addresses included in the total dataset span all major news outlets,

from the reputable *The New York Times* to online info-blog *Thought Catalog*.

#SurvivingCostMe was not covered by any media outlet beyond *The Huffington Post*, the

originator of the hashtag. Twitter highlights that users visit one billion websites monthly

based upon following hyperlinks embedded within tweets (Twitter, 2017a). Therefore,

the incorporation of URLs within tweets can promote not only a single comment online,

but also direct users to a more developed narrative elsewhere online.

Hashtivism. #CarryThatWeight and #IStandWithJackie's popularity can also be

attributed to their abilities to illicit hashtivism – calling upon followers to become

supporters, compelling action. For example, leading up to the National Day of Action, hashtivists were encouraged to register their campuses to earn recognition for their participation at www.carryingtheweighttogether.tumblr.com. Images from registered events were highlighted on this Tumblr page.

Rhoads (2016) discusses the utility of social media as a space in which students harness their fluency in CMC to mobilize social movements. Paralleling the work of #BlackLivesMatter, the hashtags investigated for this research study would become online platforms through which elucidatory and critical dialogue could be widely accessed (Flores, 2015). In fact, the two social justice movements would converge. A total of 24 tweets associated with #IStandWithJackie included #ICantBreathe, nine tweets included #BlackLivesMatter. and 8 tweets included #EricGarner. Such overlap was not found to be as prominent in association with #CarryThatWeight, as only four tweets would include #BlackLivesMatter and two tweets would include #ICantBreathe, or #SurvivingCostMe, which only had two tweets with #Ferguson. Through the hashtag vehicle, social media users can follow a diverse string of dialogue in which individuals on the front lines and passive observers can participate.

Users would seek to associate other narratives of sexual violence and survivorship with #CarryThatWeight and #IStandWithJackie. Individuals would either cross-hashtag, tagging other hashtags with the goal of promoting more traffic to another, or sub-hashtag, including a related term to represent the main discussion. For example, 204 tweets containing #JusticeforJada within #CarryThatWeight, used as a cross-hashtag, and 91 tweets containing #rapeculture, a sub-hashtag. Twitter encourages users to use cross- and

sub-hashtags to direct user traffic in digitized conversations, growing the potential benefit and use of hashtivism (Wadlington, 2016).

Implications for Practice

The implications for higher education practitioners in being aware of the utility of social media for digital natives and survivors is to be aware of its abilities to promote hashtivism and amplify stories of marginalized populations. It is also important to note the implications for the various foundational theories associated with non-dominant groups.

Implications for Psychopolitical Validity Theory. Prilleltensky (2003) espouses that through intentional agenda setting, a dominant, oppressive group is able to create cultural and communicative barriers that continue to oppress the marginalized, oppresed group. For the aggrieved group to be able to push against their own dominance and reclaim their power and wellbeing, they must call attention to their plight. Social media is providing a forum through which sexual assault survivors are able to raise awareness to their experience, reframe the taboos associated with their sexual trauma, and provide counter narratives to victim blaming.

#CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe provide evidence as to the work of survivors to reclaim their power or to engage in the process of liberation (Prilleltensky, 2003). #CarryThatWeight followed one survivor for an entire academic year where she sought to expose the adversity and metaphorical weight of enduring sexual trauma while in college. Though her senior thesis, Sulkowicz was able to provide a visual representation to the impact of her oppression – suffering from a lack of mental wellbeing and support while also experiencing shame and powerlessness (Prilleltensky,

2003). Prilleltensky (2003) highlights that the roots of this oppression are associated with corrupt governmental institutions (e.g. Columbia University, law enforcement), the prevalance and acceptance of violence upon "others," (i.e. rates of victimization in college), and the dehumanization of "others" (i.e. victim blaming). Sulowicz's mattress is a manifestation of her oppression, and she sought to challenge the narrative of what it means to be a college survivor of sexual violence by becoming unapologetically identifiable and raucous.

Prilleltensky (2003) argues that for liberation to be possible, those who experience oppression must act collectively, valuing the liberation of the whole over liberation of a few. Sulkowicz may not have intended for her work to represent the experience of survivors beyond her own narrative, but her fearlessness in coming forward sparked collective action. #CarryThatWeight mobilized an international day of action and motivated 2,119 unique individuals to sexual violence for 291 days in a public space.

Though there is more public evidence to the parallels in Sulkowicz's #CarryThatWeight with Prilleltensky's (2003) PPV, it is important to note that #IStandWithJackie and #SurvivingCostMe also contribute to the collective action of liberation. #SurvivingCostMe provides an intimate view of the life of survivors seeking to withstand the impact of their trauma in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. #IStandWithJackie highlighted the systematic plot of assailants to cause harm, indictaive of the harms and oppression associated with rape culture. #IStandWithJackie also provides evidence of the expectation that survivors should overcome the neurobiology of their trauma to recall explicit details of their trauma (i.e. the dehumanization of a survivor to be her trauma and not her whole experience).

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Going further, Prilleltensky (2003) underscores the importance of collective action through social justice, in which all those experiencing oppression seek to stand in solidarity together rather than differentiate their unique experiences. The overlaps of #CarryThatWeight and #SurvivingCostMe with #BlackLivesMatter are found not just in the tweets examined for this research, but holistically in their efforts to challenge corrupt governmental structures (Prilleltensky, 2003). The exploitation of minorities and survivors causes considerable harm – from being devalued based upon their identity to succombing to violence entirely. Voices of the majority blame the oppressed victims for their experience. Jackie is blamed for not being believable while Eric Garner was blamed for breaking the law (Baker, Goodman, & Mueller, 2015, June 13). Because emphasis is placed upon these two people based upon their individual identity, and not for their identities as oppressed beings, the structures in place that maintain their oppression will never be addressed (Prilleltensky, 2008). "In essence, a culture that emphasizes individualism and blames victims for their misfortune is bound to fix people and not structures" (Prilleltensky, 2008, p. 126). The efforts of the hashtags investigated in this study and #BlackLivesMatter seeks to amplify the plight of their survivors to articulate their oppression as a part of a collective of survivors with shared experiences of violence, dehumanization, and oppression. The momentum behind these social action groups aligns itself with work required to seek liberation – developing a unified movement to challege oppressive forces (Prilleltensky, 2003).

However, it is critical to note that the work towards liberation is constant and does not end even if liberation is assumed to have been obtained. For example, #IStandWithJackie underscores the divisive dialogue that still surrounds sexual violence

in modern society and the extent to which some individuals will go to dominate sexual violence survivors. Social media provide a forum for people to express themselves and hashtags synonymous with survivorship and sexual violence are just as accessible to self-identified men's rights activists, rape apologists, and trolls as they are to survivors themselves. Though #IStandWithJackie first emerged to express support and solidarity, the most liked tweet posted would use the sub-hashtags #UVAHoax and #UVARapeHoax to document their belief that Jackie falsified her assault (tweet 3,440). Additionally, more than one-quarter of all tweets posted in association with #IStandWithJackie would include #UVAHoax. Interestingly, though hundreds of tweets would be posted to discredit and demean Jackie, those individuals consciously tagged #IStandWithJackie in their posts. They wanted those following the digitized conversation to be made aware of their commentary.

It is important to note, too, that the degree of opposition amongst social media users has the ability to silence moderates or those less versed in the hashtag's originating narrative within the digitized conversation. Analysis of the tweets associated with this research study finds that participants in online dialogues regarding sexual violence represent two camps – those who are sympathetic to the plight of survivors and those who feel that the prevalence of rape is over-reported, exaggerated, or feel as though a simple proclamation of trauma is insufficient to determine if an assault took place. Examples of these divergent perspectives include, "#IStandWithJackie because the #UVA case is teaching men that imaginary rapes will still be used against them" (tweet 850), "Get fucked, @RollingStone. How dare you throw that woman under a bus for your own failures. #IStandWithJackie" (tweet 30), "YES women DO lie about being raped.

Often for the MOST trivial reasons… #IStandWithJackie #WomenAgainstFeminism"
(tweet 2,250), "As a recent survivor of sexual assault, #IStandWithJackie Fuck those
people who try to shame her, and fuck Rolling Stone" (tweet 1,290), "@RedPillTweets
she wanted that ass fucking #CarryThatWeight" (tweet 3,620), and ".@Columbia is
fining students for supporting a rape survivor, while the rapist goes unpunished. The
message is clear. #carrythatweight" (tweet 2,870).

Further underscoring the use of agenda setting, #CarryThatWeight,
#IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe seek to advance the narrative of survivors.
#CarryThatWeight's central survivor, as previously shared, was featured in numerous
news stories in a variety of venues. Her accessiblity to journalists aided in her abilities to
establish her narrative in the public sphere, allowing her to set and maintain the agenda as
it related to her experience. #SurvivingCostMe sought to provide a space in which others
could similarly provide details and allowed the survivors to manage their identities in
terms of how public or private they wished to remain. *Rolling Stone's* article similarly
sought to promote the experience of survivors, though it's reception was not as warmly
received, as documented in this research study's analysis.

As found with the three hashtags investigated for this research study, only those
hashtags that receive "trending" status appear to become newsworthy; thusly representing
the aforementioned camps. It is unlikely that tempered perspectives and opinions then
become news worthy, which may have implications for agenda setting. Analysis of
#CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe finds that those
representing a more moderate perspective are less likely to participate in sustained online
conversations within their respective hashtag. Contributors who represent a more ardent

viewpoint participate in sustained online conversation, such as the hashtivists called to arms with #CarryThatWeight or those in defense of or in opposition of Jackie in #IStandWithJackie.

Activism associated with Jackie's narrative of sexual violence was found to be fruitful in bringing about continued conversation regarding sexual violence at the University of Virgina (UVA) (Juran, 2016). Initially, UVA President Teresa Sullivan's reactions to the #IStandWithJackie narrative included criticism of *Rolling Stone Magazine* for attempting to defame their institution and highlight the sustained efforts of the University to combat sexual violence preceeding the article (de Bruyn, 2015). It would not be until after public condemnation, a campus protest, and petition that Sullivan would issue another statement in which she would illuminate desires for a safer, more inclusive campus community (Juran, 2016). She would also state, however, that those aware of the events surrounding Jackie's experience had a responsibility to come forward with facts (Juran, 2016). Though unable to discuss the specific allegations made by Jackie directly due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Sullivan acknowledged that the conversation regarding Jackie's narrative was received (Juran, 2016). However, #IStandWithJackie would not become a trending topic on Twitter until days later; Sullivan's remarks were published November 19 and 22, 2014, respectively while #IStandWithJackie would not become widely accessed until December 5, 2014. Therefore, I am unable to correspond the hashtivism sparked by #IStandWithJackie to the promotion of liberation at UVA. In regards to #CarryThatWeight, Columbia University provided an enhanced website regarding sexual respect in January 2014, eight months ahead of Sulkowicz's public proclimations (Kaminer, 2014, January 29).

The utility of social media to promote liberation and wellbeing in the face of oppression is evident; however, I am unable to directly correlate any of the hashtags investigated with this study towards any direct example of such social justice at their corresponding campuses. I recommend that future research investigate the use of hashtivism as a tool for liberation and, if possible, document any direct examples of liberation associated with the movement. I also recommend future research to investigate the thematic nature of tweets posted in association with hashtags online to determine the role, if any, moderate perspectives play in trending hashtags. Further, future research should continue to review the hypothesis that only persistently posted, extreme, and opposing viewpoints regarding a given topic lead towards a hashtag becoming popular within media reports to determine its impact upon agenda setting and hashtivism.

Implications for Feminist Communication Theory. The use of social media as a space where minority voices and perspectives can be shared has been highlighted in research (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009; Nunez, 2015; Shaw, 2014). The use of Twitter by college survivors of sexual violence to raise awareness regarding their trauma was found in this research study. #SurvivingCostMe serves as a platform for survivors to articulate the harms associated with their trauma to raise awareness. #CarryThatWeight and #IStandWithJackie provide examples of how survivors can be resilient and persevere academically, though they face psychological triggers and criticism. These hashtags seek to motivate action and hashtivism of their followers and supporters with varying levels of success.

However, as feminist communication scholars argue, CMC is a tool is used to amplify the power of the individual user (Shaw, 2014). Depending upon the character and

motiviations of the individual user, social media can be used to promote critical thought or to condemn it. but social media itself is not inherently positive or negative. Though #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe sought to promote a feminist message, they were just as easily accessed by those who seek to denounce such narratives. The ability of trolls to use these hashtags to promote harmful language was found in association with #CarryThatWeight and #IStandWithJackie. Of these two hashtags, Jackie's narrative that received the most trolling.

Though Jackie did not intend to promote her experience publicly, she was sought out and her trauma narrative became central to *Rolling Stone Magazine*'s efforts to expose the incidence of sexual violence in college. As questions regarding the accuracy of her account grew, so too did the volatility of its associated hashtag. Ultimately, #IStandWithJackie became less of a "safe space" for discourse once *Rolling Stone Magazine* officially retracted their article about Jackie. The hashtag began to represent a polarized perspective of rape culture in which two camps – those in support of Jackie and those in opposition – in which they became much more vocal in their disputes online. As one camp became much more vocal in their tweets against rape culture, the extreme counter-narrative by "trolls" became more evident. Trolls would use the hashtag to discredit feminism, rape culture, and prevalence of sexual violence (Phillips, 2015). Though I am unsure if the denial of sexual violence would be considered a dominant narrative, a skewed sub-population of others, identified as rape apologists, sought to exploit #IStandWithJackie to emphasize their standpoint. By the end of December 2014, the #IStandWithJackie was largely abandoned by survivors and supporters.

Feminist communication theory is critical of language, messages, and channels in their promotion of power and privilege (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009; Shaw 2014). However, the communication of those marginalized can prove powerful when they counter dominant narratives in public spaces. As evident in this research study, partnering with relevant organizations, empathetic government officials and celebrities, and news outlets are valuable for hashtivism. For example, Sulkowicz and her #CarryThatWeight campaign received support from *Ms. Magazine*, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, and several feminist non-profits. Her associated hashtivism was also documented to be the most active online and in real life.

To grow this base of support, it is important to not only communicate to fellow college survivors and empathizers, but also to administrators and educational institutions. Sulkowicz and Jackie shared their experiences not only in intimate circles of survivors, but also with a public audience. Because of their national narrative, I sought to investigate the discussions of laypersons online in association with their movements. I was introduced to the narratives through a more traditional media-to-consumer process. However, not all of us aware of their experiences learned of it through such means; some individuals witnessed these hashtags innocently via trending Twitter topics or in sensing the community impact of these narratives within their own college communities.

It was not until I launched this research study that I was aware of the nuances of Twitter, including that some users omit the originating hashtag in replies to others to accommodate word count limitations. As a result, not all conversations regarding the narratives central to #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe were captured in the dataset. Not knowing Twitter shorthand or hashtag phraseology can make

the use of social media or participation in hashtivism intimidating for individuals to participate – something I experienced firsthand! I was unaware of "doxxing" as a practice or term for the proliferation of abbreviations to maximize character restrictions (e.g., MSM for mainstream media, SJW for social justice warrior, and MRA for men's rights activist). But, as a practitioner, having awareness of this information makes me a more educated consumer of social media and more conscious of the power of language. Providing guides to novice social media consumers which highlight hashtivism and related efforts could prove fruitful in building alliances.

Implications for Muted Group Theory. Sexual assault survivors are a muted group based upon their experiences as trauma survivors, harmed by a violent act that is often viewed at being the fault of the survivor rather than the perpetrator. The language used to describe their assaults and the instutitions responsible for their definitions all serve the dominant culture – largely caucasian, affluent men. Research reveal the utility of sexual assault survivors to reclaim aspects of their voice and power via communicative channels, including social media. However, though the survivors profiled for this research study are muted by their trauma, it is important to note that their identities as being female, minority, queer, etc. also further mute their realities.

For example, though Sulkowicz is now commonly associated with her senior thesis and trauma narrative, her identitiy as a woman and a person of color still cause her to be muted. This is supported by the work of Burnett et al. (2009) in that communication and language serve dominant groups – traditionally caucasian men. Sulkowicz was not only muted as a result of her sexual trauma, but she was muted prior to it based upon her gender and race.

She is one of very few women of color who have come forward publicly, of which many emphasize being a survivor of trauma generally, not incorporating the nuances of their racial or cultural backgrounds of their experience. Though her overall narrative is no longer muted, Sulkowicz herself is. It is important, though, to note her muting experience throughout her ordeal. Muted group theory espouses that survivors of sexual violence often struggle to define their assaults, as their experience cannot be easily defined through dominant language. Further, muted group theory also states that subordinate groups are muted by their inabilities to assimilate their experiences into the dominant discourse.

Sulkowicz described the silencing affect her sexual trauma had upon her abilities to share her experience with others. "When it first happened, I didn't want to talk to anyone. I didn't even tell my parents…I didn't even want to talk to my best friend" (Bolger, 2014, para. 8). Sulkowicz further experienced muting when she received criticism for continuing her senior thesis in light of her battles against Columbia University and law enforcement proved unsuccessful. For example, feminist art scholar and social commentator Camille Paglia stated Sulkowicz's *Mattress Performance* was "a parody" and that by carrying the mattress Sulkowicz effectively "trapped herself in her own bad memories and publicly labeled herself as a victim, which will now be her identity forever" (Cascone, 2015, para. 3 & 6). Paglia went on to state that the increasing sensitivity required of academics pedagogically was silencing professors, rather than providing communicative accommodations and support for survivors. "The situation is worsening year by year, as teachers have to watch what they say and give trigger

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warnings, because God forbid that American students should have to confront the brutal realitites of human life" (Cascone, 2015, para. 7).

Sulkowicz would condemn the comments from Paglia as being counter to a collective feminist goal of gender equality. She went on to state that Paglia lacked both the cultural competence and understanding of Sulkowicz's experience to comment publicly.

> Camille Paglia has publicly called my artwork a "masochistic exercise" in which I neither "evolve" nor "move-on." She speaks as if she, a white woman, knew what was best for me, a woman of color she's never met. Many people ask me how I've "healed" from my assault, as if healing were another word for "forgetting about it," "getting over it," or even "shutting up about it." To expect me to move on is to equate courage with self-censorship. (Palella, 2016, para. 8)

Jackie was first supported in her desire to withhold information from *Rolling Stone Magazine*.

> Because of the sensitive nature of Jackie's story, we decided to honor her request not to contact the man who she claimed orchestrated the attack on her nor any of the men who she claimed participated in the attack for fear of retaliation against her. (Dana, 2014, para. 2)

However, *Rolling Stone* would state that not pursing such information and interviewing the alleged assailants made them unable to defend the story against persistent questioning (Dana, 2014). The "discrepancies" found in the information eventually provided by *Rolling Stone* caused the magazine to state that they were "mistaken" in honoring Jackie's request, later retracting the article (Dana, 2014, para. 3

& 4). *Rolling Stone Magazine* sought out Jackie, published her reluctant narrative, then later retracted the published article – an organized silencing of a survivor. Further, Jackie would experience extensive online harassment to the extent that information regarding her identity was shared online. Jackie would tell *The Washington Post* in 2014, "I never asked for this [attention]" (Shapiro, 2014, para. 8). However, fourteen-months later, a *Washington Post* article with the title "Jackie's rape story was false. So why hasn't the media named her by now?" was published arguing that withholding Jackie's full legal name is "fundamentally unfair" (Farhl, 2016, para. 20). Moreover, the article states that the withholding of names of "alleged victims perpetuates a climate of silence and shame" leading survivors not report their trauma (Farhl, 2016, para. 8).

More research is recommended to further investigate the utility of social media by muted groups online. This current study discusses the conversations held about sexual violence in college via social media; specifically, I investigated discourse involving #CarryThatWeight, #IStandWithJackie, and #SurvivingCostMe. Being able to capture more generalizable data and research on the ways in which social media can be accessed and used by different silenced groups would provide greater understanding regarding how power is promoted online. Future research studies are also encouraged to investigate the impact of trolling via CMC upon muted groups. Additional research on the impact of being publicly associated with one's trauma narrative is also valuable, especially in determining the impact and public reaction of a survivor being self-identified or doxxed.

Summary

This research study was designed to answer the ultimate question of how sexual violence survivors are using social media. Through this research, I found that survivors

use social media as a place to discuss their concerns, build community, share their experiences, relay information, and engage in hashtivism. What is important to note, however, is that not all survivors self-identify or self-disclose. The decision to out one's identity as a survivor is a deeply personal, as it is to divulge any private information. The implications of such a revelation are wide ranging – from receiving support and solidarity to being the target of harassment. The narratives shared publicly by Emma, Jackie, and the contributors to #SurvivingCostMe show the range of reactions that unknown persons online can have in regards to a disclosure of trauma.

As a Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) officer, this research reveals that the abilities of activists to provide resource information and support for sexual violence survivors. For example, with KnowYourIX, SurvJustice, and End Rape on Campus having a presence online, they are able to connect with student survivors. Though not central to this research study, there are relationships with these non-profits and the federal action behind Title IX and the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistic Act (Ziering & Dick, 2015). These groups are more successful in reaching student audiences based upon their abilities to reach survivors via social media.

Campuses must be more astute in their social media presence online – not only in their own representation, but in observance of the widely communicated student experience. Rubin Erdely (2014), for example, highlighted the subculture of the UVA experience in her piece, condemning the campus for being unaware of the realities of student life within their campus community. Whether the reporting was factual or not continues to be debated; however, the perceptions and realities shared by students

interviewed for the piece highlight that students are willing to share their experience, if solicited. #SurvivingCostMe parallels this theme as contributors received no incentive to publicly document their own trauma, but instead were simply encouraged to reveal their trauma and its impact. I feel it appropriate for campus professionals to periodically monitor what students are communicating online in reference to campus life to make appropriate referrals and recommendations. For example, the student at Pace University who publicly shared her trauma in 21 tweets associated with #SurvivingCostMe could use that information to more thoughtfully review if her interpretation of her experience is indicative of the need for internal enhancements to supporting survivors. If the individual was not known to campus officials, in consultation with General Counsel, administrators could vet reaching out to her. It will be important for the campus to be mindful of setting precedent, therefore establishing and documenting protocols in such cases is important. Such a process could provide the institution with the abilities to demonstrate their valuing of student wellbeing by reaching out to students that may or may not otherwise be connected to campus services.

OCR has made the use of campus climate survey a part of resolution agreements with campuses investigated for Title IX complaints; campus professionals must use this instrument to solicit the student experience to then make important recommendations to marketing campaigns, services and referrals, and policies and procedures. By being intentional in the solicitation of student feedback in wide-reaching assessments, campuses can remain informed of how students perceive the campus climate and make timely enhancements as a result. For example, if a campus learns that students are wary of the community adjacent to campus in the evenings, further investigation can be made

through focus groups to determine the concern. Once themes emerge, campus officials can then work to address the concerns. Being receptive and responsive, just as the aforementioned non-profits are being, demonstrates the campus' commitment to their students' safety and wellbeing.

As a higher education administrator, realizing the utility of social media to promote the individual experience, both positive and negative, has been extremely powerful. Witnessing self-identified survivors express their concerns in reconciling the varied processes associated with reporting the assault to law enforcement and/or their educational institutions provides further clarity to me in the need to streamline and clarify reporting options. Title IX requires wide-reaching policies that can be easily accessed online; however, the language often used in association with sexual violence can fail to resonate with survivors based upon communication breakdowns and cultural language barriers (Fisher et al., 2000; Kramarae, 1981; U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014a). Campuses must balance the legal requirements of the government mandates along with negotiating the ethical and moral obligations of supporting survivors. Student wellbeing is of paramount importance, as is being in federal compliance. Finding ways to ensure that the values of the institution are promoted in the prevention and response to sexual violence is also sincerely important.

As a feminist scholar, I am deeply conflicted by what I have witnessed through this research. Though I am amazed at the strength of several survivors in sharing their stories online, I am equally aghast at the lengths others will go to shame, harass, and troll these survivors. There were several days when I felt physically ill at reading the cruel comments against Emma or Jackie. I am amazed *Rolling Stone Magazine* would justify

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insufficient journalistic practices as an attempt to be victim-centered. Their failures to more fully seek details regarding Jackie's experience are their own, and should in no way be placed at the feet of the young adult they used. I had hoped my research would overwhelmingly reveal the positive ways in which social media is used to correct power imbalances and challenge patriarchal and oppressive cultural norms. Though some of my research does show the power of personal narratives, it also unfortunately documents the darkness of CMC and of anonymous individuals taking aim at others to inflict psychological harm.

Not being a digital native, I question the use of social media in many ways – especially in providing intimate information in a very public and widely-accessible space. However, I must view social media for what it is – a tool (Shaw, 2014). The tool is only as beneficial or detrimental as the individual using it at any given time. If anything, I now view social media as a megaphone, exponentially amplifying the sentiments of individuals that would otherwise go unsaid. I question if the trolls identified in my research would be so bold as to publicly state their comments in front of a group of peers, loved ones, or even those they target in person. However, because of its accessibility, social media provides a forum through which those who feel isolated by their trauma are can connect with others, which, I hope, brings about their own sense of self and wellbeing.

In closing, I embarked upon this research study with the intention of documenting the ability of social media to promote marginalized voices expressing taboo experiences to a public audience. The findings indicate the utility of social media to both counter and fortify patriarchal systems and cultural norms. The emergence of hashtivism associated

with social media demonstrates its abilities to form virtual communities and mobilize

online users to act in the real world. Just like CMC, hashtivism is merely a tool that can

promote the intentions of the individual user; it is not inherently positive or negative

(Shaw, 2014). Therefore, widespread media coverage of hashtivism and online rhetoric

exponentially amplifies the goal of the user – to promote a perspective and narrative to a

wide-reaching audience. Though the experiences and perspectives of online users may

not generalizable, they do represent the realities of that individual. The acknowledgement

and value of the individual experience is central to social media and is highly regarded by

those whose voices are muted and marginalized.

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