Evaluating Campus-based Sexual Harassment, Misconduct & Violence Response and Prevention Needs among Urban Commuter Campus Students: Lessons Learned and Applications to Faculty & Staff Needs

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Background

• Academic institutions are working to improve response to and prevention of sexual harassment, misconduct and violence (SHMV) among students.
• A 2017 Association of American Universities report found that the majority had conducted surveys, held cross-campus conversations, and increased resources to achieve this goal.
• Fewer engage faculty and staff, despite the 2018 National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NAS) report on SHMV in academia.
• City College of New York formed the Gender-based Violence Awareness and Prevention (GAP) Alliance to build a robust, campus-wide response and prevention approach.
• The City University of New York has 28 colleges and serves nearly 500,000 students.
• City College of New York serves ~16,000 students.

Purpose

• We describe experiences of a campus-wide team (faculty, staff, and administrators) implementing research to characterize the unique needs of urban, commuter campus students around SHMV.
• Goal is to identify gaps in knowledge, awareness, reporting and response.
• We located campus hotspots for optimizing research to characterize the unique needs of urban, commuter campus students around SHMV.

Methods

• CUNY campus climate survey data reviewed
• American College Health Survey data for CCNY reviewed and supplementary analysis conducted.
• Previously published qualitative in-depth interview study results reviewed.
• Mapping groups with students held.
• Novel in-depth interviews conducted.
• Results presented to the GAP Alliance.

Acknowledgments

This research was supported by the New York City Council, the NIH (U54-CA132378) and the Department of Justice. We thank the student participants in the research presented here. We also thank the GAP Alliance members who have informed the design and execution of this research.

CUNY CAMPUS CLIMATE STUDENT DATA

Sexual penetration without consent (2016):
• 2% (N=376) at least once P12M
• 72% (N=269/376) CUNY students at the time

Of these 269:
• 39% (N=104) involved force/threats of force
• 30% (N=80) incapacitated/unable to consent
• 28% (N=74) were CUNY affiliated

Of 74, 89% students; 8% faculty; 5% staff

WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE ACCORDING TO STUDENTS?

Commuter Campus Students described when they knew someone had “crossed the line” – whether and when a sexual experience was or became a sexual violence experience.
• “It’s usually, I guess, a gut feeling. In a moment like that, you shouldn’t feel angry, so if you start feeling that emotion, even if you’re not able to I guess identify what exactly caused it, that’s when you know something is wrong” (ID22).
• “Even if you’re not exactly sure how they crossed the line or why the line was crossed the line or you should react, I think there’s always something in the back of your mind that you know something’s not right.” (ID14)
• “Even if it’s just a subtle feeling that 5% could mean that something went wrong” (ID29).

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HOW CAN WE PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE AMONG STUDENTS? BYSTANDER INTERVENTION

Students who receive training on sexual violence prevention are more likely to confront a friend who plans to use alcohol to get sex and challenge those who blame victims for being assaulted.

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Student Thoughts on Bystander Intervention & Training:

“I’m afraid if I intervene…am I going to fix anything?”

“A lot of people ignore them, but they don’t realize it impacts people anyway. Because when they’re thinking sexual assault they’re thinking rape…the big things… I think you have to start with the small things that people often ignore.

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HOW CAN WE PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE AMONG STUDENTS? AFFIRMATIVE CONSENT

According to CUNY climate survey data:
• 7% of students would not stop sex if asked, if they did not want to
• 4% of students would not stop sex if asked, if they did not want to

Lessons Learned

• Campus-level data may exist on the problem of SHMV on campuses among faculty and staff, a first step is to identify and explore existing data.
• The student-level research activities we engaged in are promising practices for describing the problem among faculty and staff.
• Bystander intervention as prevention and training on interrupting and responding to microaggressions have potential for changing the faculty and staff behaviors that are “below the waterline” and contribute to what the NASEM report describes as “an organizational climate that tolerates harassment.”
• Next steps with faculty and staff at CCNY include coordinating with an on-going working group on diversity, equity and inclusion and conducting a needs assessment.
• Challenges include resources, time, and commitment to a comprehensive approach to harassment, misconduct and violence across multiple, intersecting domains, including race/gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, ability, and other categories.
• Success will be measured in the emergence of an effective task force, an outcomes-focused action plan (e.g., representation of women of color in leadership, inclusion of SHMV prevention-related content in core course syllabi, etc.), and adequate resources to support the transformative education, training and support for faculty and staff, changed policies to reflect best practices and an evaluation to monitor impact.

Conclusions

• Higher education settings have made significant progress in understanding SHMV among students.
• The approaches and lessons learned with students can be extended to SHMV among faculty and staff with appropriate adjustments and considerations.

References