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This chapter provides concrete ways higher education professionals can support sexual violence survivors on campus at the individual, community, and institutional levels.

Creating Campus Communities of Care: Supporting Sexual Violence Survivors

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At first I thought that the rape was the worst thing that could have ever happened to me, but what happened after that on campus, the way people treated me . . . that was far worse.

—Anonymous Survivor (personal communication, September 21, 2014)

The national landscape of college campuses has shifted over the last decade toward an increased focus on sexual violence. However, many survivors of campus sexual violence remain isolated, unsupported, and frustrated (White House Taskforce to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014). Although there are students, staff, and faculty on campuses across the nation who work tirelessly and care deeply about supporting survivors, it needs to be a campus-wide effort. This chapter presents several recommendations for higher education professionals to consider as they work to better support survivors on their campuses. Each recommendation rests on a foundation of understanding survivor experiences and creating campus communities of care. The recommendations are grouped into three tiers of campus life: individual, community, and institution. At the core of this discussion is a focus on survivors and supporting their journey toward healing.

Understanding Survivor Experiences

[My sexual assault was] all consuming . . . I was haunted. My thoughts, when I slept, when I walked alone, all the time.

—Aeryn, Survivor (Monahan-Kreishman, 2012, p. 182)

Imagine what it must be like to be a survivor, having come to college with great hopes and expectations, trusting that the campus was a safe place to learn, grow, and transform in unexpected ways. Then you find yourself, having made the very reasonable decision to trust a fellow student, entrapped instead in a living nightmare. Most sexual violence is perpetrated by someone the victim knows and trusts (Black et al., 2011), which can make living with the aftermath that much more unnerving. Survivors share experiences of friends taking sides, siding with the perpetrator, and victim-blaming (Monahan-Kreishman, 2012). Sexual assault is an event that they never saw coming and could not have prevented. Survivors are not to blame for the crimes committed against them, and yet they are often the first to self-blame (Herman, 2015). For too many campus sexual violence survivors, the assault is just the beginning. The trauma is deepened by the ways in which the survivor is treated by campus community members following the sexual assault.

The traumatic psychological aftermath can be mitigated, however, by shifting community and professional practice toward supporting the healing of the traumatized student. Additionally, effective support given to sexual violence survivors can be part of a larger effort of prevention.

Creating Campus Communities of Care

As illustrated by the civil rights, women's equality, disability rights, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and gender non-conforming community movements, social change happens when individual voices come together as one unified force. Similarly, social change on campus begins with individuals who, with enough momentum and common purpose, become part of a collective movement. The recommendations we outline in this chapter are grounded in the lived experiences of sexual assault survivors. They must be enacted in the context of an interconnected campus environment. In line with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) (2015) social-ecological model (see Chapter 2), the actions of individual students, staff, and faculty influence campus communities, which influence institutions. How each institution positions itself on the issue of sexual violence, both informally and formally, further influences individual thoughts and actions. The power for change rests within the *individual, community, and institutional* levels of campus life. These interconnections can establish meaningful and empowering student affairs practice with and for survivors.

Recommendations for Individuals

Individuals play a critical role in creating safe and healing spaces for survivors of sexual violence on college campuses. Survivors' initial efforts to seek institutional support and services beyond their peers will likely be with a staff or faculty member. Therefore, it is critical that every faculty and staff

person, regardless of title or role, be prepared for disclosures. Two key components of effective practice for individuals doing this work include implementing response strategies that are trauma informed and identifying one's own implicit bias.

Trauma-Informed Care. Language and behaviors of friends, staff, and faculty can re-traumatize survivors (Monahan-Kreishman, 2012). Campus officials can minimize re-traumatization by ensuring that students, staff, and faculty acquire skills to best meet the survivors' needs (Shalka, 2015). Trauma-informed care (TIC) focuses on understanding how trauma influences a person's response to an incident and shapes their negotiation of its aftermath (Reeves, 2015). Applying a TIC approach includes listening to and learning from survivors and trauma researchers to create "an environment that is both aware of and capable of effectively responding to trauma" (Shalka, 2015, p. 22).

Trauma theory, developed in the 1970s, "acknowledges that the experience of trauma can overwhelm internal and external coping resources" (Richmond, Geiger, & Reed, 2013, p. 444). When the body experiences a trauma like sexual violence, the brain is flooded with chemicals. Depending on which chemicals are released, the traumatized person will behave differently. Responses directly tied to biological chemical release include an inability to express intense emotion, loss and damage to memory or rational thought, hypervigilance, inability to distinguish danger signs, reduced immune response, and even a bonding with and defending of the perpetrator (Levine & Frederick, 1997). An accurate understanding of the neurobiology of trauma can set up campus responders to better understand, believe, and help survivors gain access to necessary resources.

Campuses must also assess how their response practices might re-traumatize survivors. Once assessed, campus officials must adjust practices accordingly. For example, instead of using language such as "don't be a victim," campus communications can say, "victims are never to blame."

Another technique that embraces a trauma-informed response is the Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview (FETI). This is an interview technique that treats survivors "in ways that empower and calm them" (Battered Women's Justice Project, 2014, para. 1). Although originally designed as a certification for law enforcement, the tenets of FETI can also assist campus police, Title IX staff, student activities staff, and hall directors alike. FETI enables all higher education professionals to build rapport with traumatized victims of crime. FETI increases trust, reduces shame, and yields clearer and more accurate information about the assault by utilizing questions focused on the senses instead of the chronology of events. Language and tone are powerful conveyors of both doubt and belief. Using caring and thoughtful language and softening the tone and volume of the individual's voice are examples of trauma-informed communication (Green et al., 2016).

Implicit Bias. Faculty and staff members must be aware of their own biases to reduce the possibility of re-traumatizing victims. Implicit bias

theory helps us understand that humans have negative “automatic cognitive or affective associations . . . which are accessible and can be operative in influencing judgment and behavior without the conscious awareness of the agent” (Holroyd, 2012, p. 275). Implicit bias manifests in contemporary dialogues related to race, recently exemplified by backlash against the Black Lives Matter movement, and spurred by the murders of unarmed African American men by white police officers (Grills, Aird, & Rowe, 2016). Given generations of exposure to affect-based (positive or negative) stereotyped information, and the brain’s categorization and evaluative functions, no one is immune to implicit bias (Amodio & Divine, 2006; Devine, Plant, Amodio, Harmon-Jones, & Vance, 2002). However, when made aware of our inevitable biases, and the negative behaviors associated with them, we are better equipped to reduce and correct biased judgments and actions. Two excellent resources for exploring implicit bias are the Harvard Implicit Bias Test (Project Implicit, 2011) and the privileged identity exploration model (Watt, 2007).

A combination of sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and other implicit biases influences how we conceptualize and respond to sexual violence. Given the diverse and intersecting identities of sexual violence survivors, implicit bias manifests in myriad complex ways. For example, implicit bias may lead to an unconscious, unintentional belief in the notion that victims are lying and perpetrators are unjustly accused.

Implicit bias is fueled, in part, by the persistent human belief in a just world. The Just World Hypothesis assumes that a person’s actions will result in morally just outcomes to the individual (Lerner, 2013). In the case of sexual violence, the Just World Hypothesis results in victim-blaming, based on the delusion that sexual violence is the result of the victim’s poor behavior or judgment. Such a false impression provides a cognitive safe haven. It is easier to believe that the victim brought the violence on themselves than to believe that fellow college students are perpetrators.

Implicit bias may result in accusatory questioning of victims and unconscious favoring of perpetrators. Victim-blaming questions can include: What were you wearing? How much did you drink? Why didn’t you call for help? Given individuals’ limited capacity to identify bias (Grills et al., 2016), students, staff, and faculty are left to act upon preferential instincts that increase the amount of shame and blame felt by survivors.

Effectively supporting survivors means consciously navigating one’s own implicit bias and being aware of and accurately understanding trauma’s on-going impact on survivors. Strategies to become more aware of one’s implicit biases include education on the intersections of sexual violence and social identity. Also, individuals can deepen their understanding of trauma by empathizing with the pain and devastation of sexual violence. For example, reading published victim impact statements, such as the one written by the woman raped by Brock Turner (Palotta, 2016), or watching TED Talks delivered by survivors provides powerful connection to the lived

experience. Empathy building is a fundamental component of this work. Empathy is not to be confused with false equivalencies, which can minimize the survivor's experience, and shift the focus toward the other person. It is helpful, when seeking to better understand the weight of living with sexual trauma, to engage with colleagues who work in victim advocacy and diversity programs. In fact, more partnerships between these multifaceted areas will be necessary to meet survivors' needs.

Recommendations for the Campus Community

Sexual violence is more than just a crime against individuals . . . it tears apart the fabric of our communities . . . We have the power to do something about it as a government, as a nation. We have the capacity to stop sexual assault, support those who have survived it, and bring perpetrators to justice.

—President Barack Obama (White House Task Force to Protect Students
From Sexual Assault, 2014, p. ii)

Campus communities, defined as students, staff, and faculty, are comprised of individuals who bring their unique tools, perspectives, and connections to the collective. The campus community can be a powerful force for positive change and healing. Conversely, it can amplify victim-blaming and disrupt survivors' movement toward healing. Because the vast majority of survivors of sexual violence do not report to faculty or staff members through formal processes (Fisher, Daigle, & Cullen, 2010), it is critically important that student affairs professionals foster the creation of campus communities of care. Below, we outline key elements central to creating and maintaining campus communities of care, including conducting campus assessment, centering minoritized student voices, creating community response teams, providing confidential spaces, and enhancing educational requirements.

Assessing Your Campus Community. To best support survivors, it is important to examine elements of the campus environment that serve to either advance survivor healing or hinder it (Monahan-Kreishman, 2012). Questions higher education professionals can ask themselves and others include: What are the messages about sexual violence, either intentional or unintentional, emerging from different communities on campus? Are there areas of campus that seem to direct their information to certain student identities and not others? What narratives exist on campus about community and individual safety? How does the community respond when notified of a sexual assault, and what does the response communicate? These questions can uncover how a community functions in the face of a crisis and how willing it is to disrupt oppression or support the status quo.

Centering Minoritized Students' Experiences. As community is cultivated, it is necessary to examine who has been historically included

and excluded. By being intentionally inclusive of students with marginalized identities, more survivors will feel part of the campus community. Intentional inclusion of minoritized voices strengthens the community's ability to name major issues, effectively address them, and provide resources.

From the centering of white, straight, cisgender women campus sexual violence survivors (Bevacqua, 2000) comes a calling for the fullest inclusion of minoritized voices and experiences (Harris & Linder, 2017). This means intentionally increasing the amount of time, energy, and resources given to the sexual violence experienced by minoritized populations on campus. The term "sexual assault survivor" has become coded, narrowing the ability to see and understand sexual violence survivors as a widely diverse population. Those who experience systemic oppression experience even greater rates of sexual violence (Black et al., 2011). Failure to acknowledge or understand the connection between oppression and violence leads to inadequate and under-resourced services, which do not meet the needs of current student populations.

Higher education professionals must find ways to be deliberately inclusive of minoritized voices. This can be accomplished by centering sexual violence as a social justice issue in conversations, trainings, and resource development (see Chapter 2 for Hong and Marine's framing). Higher education professionals can ask: Who are the survivors on our campus? What are their salient identities? What are their lived experiences? Does their truth run counter to assumptions we have made about them? Questioning must be followed by a deep exploration of the answers.

Centering minoritized populations does not mean decentering historically privileged identities. Rather, it means that higher education professionals must bring all identities equitably into focus. Centering minoritized student experiences can also better illuminate the experiences of those with intersecting dominant identities as well.

Coordinated Campus Community Response Teams. Drawing from the example of how many local communities respond to sexual violence to integrate services and avoid siloes, coordinated campus community response teams bring together an array of professionals to develop unified approaches to addressing sexual violence. These teams should include, at minimum, advocates, student conduct officers, health center staff, and campus police. Every effort should be made to ensure representation from participants with diverse social identities. The team may review cases (either open or closed), streamline community protocols and practices, educate the community, and smooth the process of reporting for survivors (Pence & McMahon, 1997). These collaborative campus and community teams "intervene in a way that speaks to the context of each victim's circumstance and respects the unique roles of the different professionals involved" (Office of Justice Programs, 2011, para. 1). An effective coordinated campus community response team recognizes the unique role each office plays, while maintaining the goal of survivor support and perpetrator accountability.

Enhanced Confidential Community Spaces. By building a community with deeper relational connections and greater coordination and partnerships, campuses can collectively write new narratives about resisting sexual violence, supporting survivors, and holding perpetrators accountable. Creating safe, confidential spaces for survivors to share their stories is central to this shift. These spaces might be a student-activist led “zine” (independently published activist magazine) such as “Saturday Night at Harvard,” in which students share art, poetry, and narrative writings on their experiences of sexual assault. Or, they might be developed through increased resources provided to campus counseling centers for group healing opportunities. The development of online anonymous reporting systems can determine perpetration patterns as well as amplify the survivor’s experience.

Universal Community Education Requirements. To ensure a supportive environment for survivors, it is vital that all members of the campus community—faculty, staff, and students—receive foundational education about sexual violence, including response to survivor disclosure, trauma-informed care, and implicit bias. By initiating discussions about daily micro-aggressions, power differentials, and other destructive norms, higher education professionals can help to disrupt or unveil these experiences, making way for the critical work of building campus communities of care. Further, higher education professionals must employ educational strategies that are culturally competent and inclusive of diverse student social group identities so that all survivors can be assured equitable access to, and representation in, reporting, response, and prevention efforts. Breadth and depth of educational content and pedagogy is critical, as outlined by Edwards, Shea, and Barboza Barela in Chapter 4.

Recommendations for Institutional Leadership

When college presidents and chancellors truly commit to ending the scourge of sexual violence in institutions of higher education, they set the highest example of what we expect from students, faculty, and administration. And so I send this message to our college and university leaders: Your leadership matters. And your actions reverberate across the nation, indeed, around the world.

—Vice President Joe Biden, 2016 (White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault, 2017, p. 1)

Leadership by Example. Senior campus officials, such as presidents, chancellors, and senior student affairs officers, must center institutional policy and practice decisions on the lived experience of campus sexual assault survivors. When they neglect to do so, they risk creating environments that embolden perpetrators and harm survivors’ physical and emotional

well-being. Senior-level officials can empower survivors and the students, staff, and faculty who support them.

As illustrated by Sisneros and Rivera in Chapter 8, it is through their leadership, inclusive of actions, words, policy and resource distribution, that institutional commitment is communicated and enacted. Actions such as “allocating sufficient resources, creating campus-wide response and prevention teams, implementing diverse response and prevention efforts, auditing prevention and response initiatives, and providing complementary and consistent messaging” (Jessup-Anger & Edwards 2015, p. 19) when done in tandem with the recommendations provided here, send a clear message of support.

Every effort must be made to break down barriers that prevent or inhibit access to sexual violence resources. Whether it be ample time during orientations, affixing stickers or magnets to doors prior to move-in, or a main-webpage link to crisis response, direct access is key. As Edwards, Shea, and Barboza Barela illustrate in Chapter 4, higher education professionals must examine and shift current education practices to unveil a multilayered approach to disseminating basic resource information to the campus community.

Incorporating a trauma-informed care approach will ensure that senior-level administrators take into consideration the lived experience, physical, and emotional needs of survivors on their campuses. For example, speeches must contain trauma-informed language and institutional direction must always rest on a foundation of survivor support. Exploring implicit bias is an ongoing process for these senior-level leaders as well. It is never too early or too late in one’s career to do this self-work. Senior-level leaders should also examine resource distribution. Historically, campus resources have been (un)intentionally distributed in ways that privilege some students over others, including survivors. It is critical that, across institutional programs, minoritized student survivors are treated equitably.

Compliance With a Conscience. At the institutional level, it is critical to resist the notion that compliance with national standards is the most important component of sexual violence response. Conscientious institutional leaders will take into consideration how programs, policies, and procedures affect individuals who have been traumatized to reduce re-traumatization. While compliance with national standards and federal law is important, leaders must also take into consideration the impact compliance has on survivors. In the fervor to implement policies and processes that meet the letter of federal guidance, many campus leaders neglect to also examine the culture of victim-blaming pervasive on our campuses.

Positions that directly serve survivors must be elevated and given a strong voice within the institutional leadership. Having a Title IX Coordinator report directly to the president is recommended by the Office for Civil Rights for good reason. Doing so provides front-line insight into diverse survivor experiences. An elevated organizational position ensures the Title

IX Coordinator's participation in the development of institutional direction and decisions about resource distribution. Individuals with a student affairs background are best suited to fill these positions given the field's holistic research and training as outlined by Landreman and Williamsen in Chapter 3.

Equal Treatment Is Not Equitable. As institutions work to meet federal requirements, the focus on compliance and minimizing risk often rises above the needs of student survivors. However, attending to the needs of survivors, in addition to the rights of those accused, often mitigates risk most effectively. Institutional policy must be built on the philosophy that equal treatment is not, in fact, equitable treatment. If colleges and universities treat everyone equally to comply with Title IX, they will continue to maintain the status quo and marginalize the experiences of survivors of diverse and intersecting marginalized identities. For example, the identical treatment of students who identify as men, women, or transgender fails to take into consideration the social privilege differential among these groups. Compound this example by explicitly naming intersecting identities, including race, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, campus social status and the complexities of power and privilege are exacerbated.

The 2011 *Dear Colleague Letter* (Ali, 2011) stated that colleges and universities should not further traumatize survivors in the process of meeting their Title IX requirements. The guidance largely centers on equality of process to avoid this trauma. Assuming equal treatment is also equitable treatment denies victims' and perpetrators' disparate levels of power and privilege. Identical and equal treatment is, in practice, an approach biased in favor of those who enter campus processes with more societal power. This systemically advantages perpetrators over survivors because of the realities of implicit bias, victim-blaming, and other aspects of a rape culture.

Conclusion

By understanding the lived experiences of campus sexual violence survivors, professionals can find their way to a more compassionate and victim-centered response (Monahan-Kreishman, 2012). This chapter is a call to manifest deeper care for survivors at the individual, community, and institutional levels of higher education. We can do this by moving beyond compliance, questioning assumptions, uncovering biases, and recognizing how trauma affects diverse survivors of sexual violence. The three tiers of campus life and the recommendations outlined in this chapter are interconnected, operating simultaneously. The recommendations can be integrated throughout policy, practice, training, professional introspection and development, campus resources, individual interactions, and public statements from the institution about campus sexual violence. It is time to amplify survivor voices from their many varied and intersecting identities. Their experiences must shape the future of this work. Let it be our mission, as higher

education professionals, to make campus communities of care a reality for survivors of sexual violence.

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