

A Media Guide for an Evolving Narrative:
understanding campus media coverage of sexual assault from a survivor perspective

Honors Thesis

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Abstract

Across the nation, campus newspapers are amplifying efforts to obtain detailed sexual assault records held by their respective universities. Should campus news organizations succeed in their requests, student reporters would have access to information that could lead to more substantive coverage of the issue and help hold institutions accountable, but could also violate the privacy of survivors and individuals involved in the case. There has been relatively little research done of campus media to guide its coverage of sexual assault on their campuses. Because of their proximity to the issue of sexual assault, campus media is often first to cover the topic. Due to this position, campus papers would do well to take a survivor centered approach to coverage of sexual assault guided by the voices of survivors in the form of a best practices guide. Through conducting interviews with survivors and campus journalists at UNC-Chapel Hill, this research investigates how both parties understand their role within media for the purpose of creating a survivor centered best practices guide that campus journalists can utilize when approaching stories about sexual assault.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	pg. 5
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	pg. 11
Chapter 3: Methods.....	pg. 31
Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion.....	pg. 37
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Best Practices.....	pg. 62
References.....	pg. 77
Appendix A: IRB Consent Form.....	pg. 81
Appendix B: Confidentiality Form.....	pg. 85
Appendix C: Survivor Contact E-mail.....	pg. 86
Appendix D: Journalist Contact E-mail.....	pg. 86
Appendix E: Recruitment Flyer.....	pg. 87
Appendix F: Survivor Interview Guide.....	pg. 88
Appendix G: Journalist Interview Guide.....	pg. 89
Appendix H: Created Best Practices Guide.....	pg. 91

CHAPTER 1- Introduction

More than one in five women will be raped or sexually assaulted during the time they are in college (The White House Council on Women and Girls, 2014). Further, nearly 6.1 percent of men in college will be victims of attempted or completed sexual assault, and those who identify as LGBTQ experience a higher percentage of assault than those who identify as heterosexual (The White House Council on Women and Girls, 2014). As staggering as these figures are, they are similar to those found in Koss's (1985) landmark study on the prevalence of sexual assault among college students. These statistics are based completely on the assaults reported, and on college campuses more than 90 percent of sexual assault victims do not report their assault (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2015). While research shows that an assault that takes place after 1990 is much more likely to be reported than one before (Lonsway & Archambault, 2012), it is reasonable to assume that these statistics are only a fraction of the amount of sexual assaults on college campuses.

Media are helping to raise awareness to the issue, evidenced in hyperlocal media coverage on the issue from college campuses across the nation. Campus media are covering details of court cases (Vagun, 2016), exposing loopholes in federal laws (Wester, 2016) and suing institutions for the release of public records concerning sexual assault (Kirk, 2016). Campus newspapers engage in a delicate balancing act to gain access to sensitive information that could either help to hold their respective universities accountable for the ways they respond to sexual assault claims or could violate the privacy of survivors who might be identified through the release of details. There has been relatively little research done of campus media to guide its progress, but because of the proximity to the issue of sexual assault, campus media is driving coverage.

For the past four years, the Daily Tar Heel (DTH), the independent student newspaper at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has filed requests for public records involving campus sexual assault. The paper had been covering the topic of assault for years, but had been denied access to information such as the names of the accused, the particular rule or policy said to be violated, essential findings of the case and details of the disciplinary sanctions imposed. These essential details have been withheld by the administration, which typically has cited federal and state privacy laws related to student records. In the fall of 2016, the DTH joined by eight North Carolina media outlets, Fusion and the Student Press Law Center amplified their efforts to gain access to this information (Wester, 2016). In an editorial to explain the paper's position, Wester (2016) argued that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, known as FERPA, allows for the release of this information, and that the University had made a conscious decision to withhold this information (Wester, 2016). On November 21, 2016 the DTH partnered with the Capital Broadcasting Company, the Charlotte Observer Publishing Company and The Durham Herald Company to file a lawsuit against Chancellor Carol Folt and Gavin Young, as custodian and senior director for public records at UNC-Chapel Hill respectively (Rice, 2016). Rice (2016) cites the attorney representing the DTH who claims that state law overrides federal law in this instance, and therefore the information should be released. At the time of this thesis proposal, the University as rejected the records request, but the paper's persistence and lawsuit involving allies suggest momentum among college media outlets arguing for a right to know about institutional handling of sexual assault.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill garnered national media attention when a 2013 federal Title IX complaint was filed by four students and a former administrator, and, more recently, after student Delaney Robinson released a public statement accusing a football

player of rape. Robinson, like the 2013 complainants, claimed the University had not responded to sexual assaults in accordance with institutional policy. This latter incident amplified the DTH's demand for institutional transparency and highlights an important facet of campus media coverage of sexual assault. However, the DTH isn't the only campus paper in the country approaching the issue, other campus papers have made similar records requests. The Kentucky Kernel, an independent student-run paper similar to the DTH, has requested records related to allegations that a professor assaulted five students at the University of Kentucky (Bult, 2016). University administration denied the requests, and the Kernel appealed to the Kentucky Attorney General, who ruled in favor of the paper. In response, the University of Kentucky is suing the Kernel to block the AG's decision that denying the requests violated public records law (Sayers, 2016). The University of Wisconsin- Madison's independent student paper, the Badger Herald, has extensively covered the charges against a student who is accused of sexually assaulting six female students (Vagun, 2016). The Badger Herald gained access to details including the pending disciplinary action and the name of the accused because the arrest was by city police thus the indictment report was public and not subject to laws that might restrain universities from disclosing information (Vagun, 2016).

As more and more campus papers approach these public records requests, it becomes evident that students could have access to sensitive information about an understudied topic, in an understudied media platform. This thesis suggests that campus papers should take a survivor centered approach to coverage of sexual assault, and that approach should be guided by the voices of survivors in the form of a best practices guide.

There is little scholarly research available that examines how campus media cover sexual assault; however, campus newspapers are expanding in influence as the national newspaper

industry falters (Steel, 2006). Research shows that students read their respective student papers more than other free daily news sources (Collins, 2008), and those who are active news consumers turn to their campus paper more often than online sources of news (Meyer, Speakman & Garud, 2016). Further, student reporters represent future news providers on a national level, and research shows that they are more likely to include a balanced array of sources and to use human-interest and issue frames to tell their stories (Burch, 2016). Campus newspapers appear to be maintaining, and even gaining influence and relevance in an industry, that is stagnating nationally. On a larger scale, journalism serves the purpose of educating citizens about issues that affect them (Walter, n.d.). Whether it's day to day life, or details on a crime committed, journalism requires the coverage of public safety as a service to society. For these reasons, campus media should be studied in relation to its coverage of sexual assault because college campuses are one in an array of niche communities that uniquely approach and experience the after-effects of this violence.

News coverage is governed in part by style guides, which model appropriate terminology and treatment of specific topics and groups; the Associated Press Stylebook is perhaps the most common of these. Additional style guides exist for covering stories on niche populations, such as individuals who identify as LGBTQ, created by associations such as Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD). Others include a National Association of Black Journalists style guide for covering topics related to the African American community, and a guide by the National Center on Disability and Journalism that advises appropriate language for reporting on individuals living with disabilities. The Diversity Style Guide, created by The Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism, is an online database that compiles a range of specialized guides, but it does not include information on how to cover sexual assault. Evidenced

by the multitude of niche style guides, it is clear that when reporting on a specialized topic, guidance may be needed to elicit a productive and not harmful report. This thesis proposal argues that campus sexual assault is worthy of a similar style of guide.

Should any campus news organization succeed in their requests for detailed sexual assault records held by universities, student reporters would have access to information that could lead to more substantive coverage of the issue and help hold institutions accountable, but could also violate the privacy of survivors and individuals involved in the case. Campus media would do well to adapt norms prescribed in previous research of national news coverage of sexual assault, while considering the hyperlocal effects their news will have on their peers.

This proposed thesis will reference the history of journalistic techniques in covering cases of sexual assault, exploring myths, narratives and flaws. With that history as its foundation, this study will consist of in-depth interviews with sexual assault survivors and campus journalists at UNC-Chapel Hill to determine from their perspectives, how campus coverage of this issue is best handled. An important rationale behind niche style guides is to allow the subjects of the stories to not be completely erased by the word choice of the reporter. Research shows this should also be true of survivors of sexual assault. Allowing individuals who have experienced sexual assault to choose the words used to describe their experience can help them take control of the emotions they are feeling (Young, 2003). Further, a culture is shaped by the words members use, but it also shapes the ways that members perceive their experience (Young, 2003). By giving voice to the survivor of assault, not only could survivors find meaning in their experience, but also they could challenge the culture's preassigned boundaries for conversation on the topic. Survivors of sexual or domestic violence each have unique experiences and research shows that those experiences shape their actions after the violence (Nurius, Macy,

Nwabuzor & Holt, 2011). Nurius et al. (2011) argue that it is possible to best tailor help and understanding of a traumatic situation by person-oriented methodologies, in which single persons are the focal point of a study with interacting factors that create a limited generalized patterns (Bergman & El-Khoury, 2003). In combining history and in-depth interviews, this project will culminate in a best practices guide that incorporates trends from national news outlets, and, importantly, takes into account survivor preferences.

Raising awareness of campus sexual assault and the ways that it has and should be covered by campus media is of paramount importance, as suggested by demand for institutional transparency of the issue. However, errors in reporting could lead to more harm than good and may be exaggerated in campus newsrooms, by students who are still learning journalism skills. The proposed best-practices guide emerging from this research will provide extensive style rules for covering the topic of campus sexual assault, identifying important knowledgeable sources and accessing information to create a well-balanced story that could increase transparency by the university while respecting the experiences of survivors. In order to fully comprehend how to develop such a guide, it will be necessary to have an understanding of how survivors and campus journalists experience and understand the role and responsibility of media in covering sexual assault. However, before exploring their unique understanding, context provided by current media coverage of sexual assault, professional recommendations and trends unique to campus media outlets will need to be considered.

CHAPTER 2- Literature Review

News coverage of sexual assault:

Media institutions and practices are gendered in ways that may affect the inclusion and omission of some topics and some perspectives. For example, Armstrong (2004) found that the gender identity of journalists is positively correlated with the gender identity of the subjects and voices portrayed in the story. Men are more likely to make the front page, be placed above the fold of a newspaper and be quoted as impactful sources (Armstrong, 2004), which not only suggests a cultural hierarchy, but also suggests that certain experiences are considered by gatekeepers to be credible and valued. These traits impact media coverage of sexual assault, a crime that disproportionately affects women and girls, and is overwhelming perpetrated by men (The White House Council on Women and Girls, 2014).

Rape myths are storylines and beliefs that limit the view of what constitutes rape (Argiero, Dyrdaahl, Fernandez, Whitney, Woodring, 2011). Among the most persistent and dangerous myths are that: a woman asked for it; she could have tried harder to fight her attacker; she wasn't innocent before the attack, so she can't be trusted now; she is using rape to conceal regret; the alleged assailant a good guy, he wouldn't do that (Burt, 1980). These myths cultivate images of what a "perfect" victim and "typical" rape look like that may exclude the most common form of assault (Hirsch, 1994; Franiuk, Seefeldt, Cephress, & Vandello, 2008), excludes assaults on men and assaults against members with non-binary gender identifications. Rather than the images that rape myths create, data suggests a much less obscure image of sexual assault.

Three out of every four rapes are committed by someone the victim knows and 27 percent are committed by the victim's current spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend (Rape, Abuse and

Incest National Network [RAINN], 2016). Two of every three sexual assaults are committed with personal weapons such as hands, feet, or teeth, while only 11 percent are committed with a weapon such as a gun or knife. More than half of sexual assaults are committed near the victim's home and 48 percent of the time, the victim is sleeping or performing another activity at home. Transgender, queer and non-gender conforming students have an assault rate of 21 percent, and 90 percent of adult victims are women. Two weeks after an assault, 94 percent of women experienced PTSD which is often related to elevated numbers of suicidal thoughts and attempts, as well as severe mental distress. Survivors of assault are more likely to use drugs than the general public, and 38 percent experience work or school related problems (RAINN, 2016). On the side of the perpetrator, 63.3 percent of men who self-reported acts that qualify as rape admitted to completing these acts more than once; however, this number can be assumed to be higher based on the fact that it's ground in self-reports (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2015). Not only do rape myths paint an image much different than what the average rape is, they encourage victim-blaming and can suggest that victims lie about their attack (Franiuk et al., 2008).

Myths are not necessarily cruel attempts to harm survivors of assault, but instead are embedded in gender stereotypes, overexposure to violence and distrust in the opposite sex (Burt, 1980; Franiuk et al., 2008). However, when media propagates rape myths public perception and understanding of sexual assault may be adversely affected. For example, rape myths can lead to fewer convictions and shorter sentences for those found guilty of sexual assault when a jury deliberates on a case based on a mass-mediated image of what assault should look like (Franiuk et al., 2008).

Disrupting rape myths is critical on college campuses where sexual assault occurs at a higher rate than that of the larger population (The White House Council on Women and Girls, 2014). Scholars have found that rape myths are believed by average college students (Barnett, 2008). One study shows that college men often think rape is accidental, a misunderstanding between two people; and that women claim rape to mask regret (Barnett, 2008). The same study also references literature that suggests that men associated with fraternities assumed that when women drink, they invite sexual contact (Barnett, 2008).

Media are a prominent source of information for these beliefs. Franiuk et al. (2008) analyzed news coverage of a high-profile rape for the presence of rape myths and found that a mean of 1.66 myths in each story. Story framing and editing decisions about what details to include, may amplify the progression of rape myths. Norms regarding newsworthiness emphasize drama and unusualness, which may encourage journalists to approach and conceptualize stories in ways that fit those criteria. Scholars argue that this is incredibly harmful when applied to coverage of sexual assault (Barnett, 2012; Worthington, 2008). When news outlets cover sexual assault by focusing only on the scandal or the most brutal and unusual scenarios, the public may begin to visualize and understand sexual assault in this narrow way (Barnett, 2012). The search for “newsworthy” material has led journalists to cover the scenarios that are least likely to occur more often than those that occur incredibly often (Worthington, 2008). Consequently the public receives cues to believe that rape is abnormal and that the perpetrators appear in monster form, rather than as ordinary individuals (Worthington, 2008). Such coverage represents a failure of the media’s watchdog function, as it misleads the public regarding the nature of sexual assault.

The way news outlets frame their stories can affect the way that the public makes sense of the issue being reported (Worthington, 2008). News stories may include specific details to tell a dramatic tale, but often leave out the broader trends, patterns and prevalence of rape (Worthington, 2008). Research suggests that individual stories tend to be isolated from statistics, trends, advocacy work and other context that would link sexual assault to broader societal issues (Barnett, 2012). Barnett's (2012) study of a college involved in a campus rape case showed that the "discourse of rape centered on cause and effect," (p. 13) instead of the larger narrative that would speak to the pervasiveness of the issue. Barnett also notes that the individuals featured in the story were exaggerated, which allowed journalists to focus their efforts on developing the perpetrator and survivor's character instead of relating the incident to larger trends of sexual violence and gender stereotypes (Barnett, 2012).

Journalists who cover sexual assault may emphasize rape myths and advance the narratives associated with them due to pressure to pursue news values. However, the lack of reliable research on the actual rate of sexual assault frustrates the reporting process, too. Research does show that between 1970 and 1990, the number of reports of sexual assault to authorities nationally have increased, but since 1990 they have remained relatively stagnant (Lonsway & Archambault, 2012). The likelihood of formally being arrested for sexual assault has decreased, according to Lonsway and Archambault (2012), who note that in the 1970s, about half of the accused were arrested compared to one-fourth in 2008.

A wave of feminist journalists has begun to challenge media accounts of sexual assault. Feminist journalism encourages reporters to be aware of these myths and narratives when covering stories in order to evoke more productive conversation and better represent rape and sexual assault for what it truly is. Four practices that feminist media scholars advocate for when

covering sexual assault are: selection of representative stories, avoidance of victim-blaming stereotypes and myths, attention to how gender violence is normalized in a larger societal context, and inclusion of the voices and perspectives of survivors and their advocates (Worthington, 2008). These scholars look at the systemic issues rather than the narrow focus of an individual case (Barnett, 2012), and consequently are able to better represent the truth behind assault on a national level.

Using the principles that feminist media scholars have detailed as points of concern, national media can begin to transition to better coverage, as Worthington (2008) points out in her study of coverage of a campus rape case. The journalists in charge of covering the assault were conscious of myths, wary of including details that might identify and compromise the privacy of a survivor and prioritized eliminating excess information that might detract from the severity of the assault itself (Worthington, 2008). The case analyzed by Worthington presented a feminist approach to coverage of sexual assault; however, it appears to be an exception rather than the norm among national coverage. In order to combat the perpetuation of myths and victim blaming narratives, professional journalists and anti-violence organizations have developed guidelines for how to cover sexual assault in ways that are more feminist and survivor-centered.

Professional recommendations:

Covering sexual assault can foster productive conversation about the issue. However, as literature has shown, myths and stereotyped narratives, along with technicalities like who the sources are and how often they are cited can produce more harm than good, even by well-meaning journalists. Because it remains an important issue, worthy of public attention, a few organizations and individuals (for reference: Chicago Taskforce on Violence Against Girls & Young Women, Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, & Global Protection Cluster) have

created guides for journalists that disrupt the norms around sexual assault stories by offering alternative word choices, interview tips and what types of narratives to avoid. Among the guides publicly available, only one stands out as tailored toward campus media, a guide created by the organization Know Your IX. Similar to the niche guides mentioned previously, these guides are designed to help media understand a situation with which they may not have a personal experience, by providing suggestions and concepts to be cautious of when writing and preparing the story. Guides focused on coverage of sexual assault and are easily accessible currently have been created by non-profits, NGOs and individuals who are experts in the topic.

Current media sources' opinion or blog sections offer a space for experts to offer commentary and/or recommendations to others in their respective fields. For example, the Guardian has an online space called the Global Development Professionals Network, for which Megan Nobert (2016) wrote about how the media should cover sexual violence. In her essay, she takes issue with an Associated Press report on the rape of aid workers in South Sudan. Nobert criticizes the author of the piece for failing to show empathy for the survivors, a mistake that threatens the integrity and importance of the article. She goes on to suggest better reporting practices and even suggests trainings about reporting and preventative measures for aid workers. While she offers her own suggestions in a broad manner, she also links to a set of guidelines created by the Global Protection Cluster. Nobert concludes her article stating that she is a rape survivor herself and for this reason she wishes that the workers in the AP story had been treated better by the reporter, showing an emotional connection to the work that undoubtedly resonated with audiences.

The Global Protection Cluster (GPC) brings together agencies, NGOs and international organizations to form an inter-agency source for policy advice and guidance. GPC also supports

protection responses in humanitarian crises around the world. The media guide created by GPC is one of a few others created by NGOs and advocacy groups that address best practices for reporting on it. In contrast to others that have been created, GPC's media guide is written in the context of a network of other agencies. Therefore, its largest section is dedicated to "Guiding Principles for UN, NGO and other Survivor Advocates," in which the GPC advises caution about connecting survivors with reporters, the need to be selective with photographs, the best practice of securing a written agreement with the reporter before the interview and important information about interviewing children (Global Protection Cluster, 2013). This section is unique to this media guide, because it is designed for an organization instead of a media source. However the guide also contains brief interview tips and suggestions with and a chart containing proper definitions of common use words for reporting on gender-based violence.

In comparison to GPC's media guide, the "Media Toolkit" created by the Chicago Taskforce on Violence Against Girls & Young Women addresses common issues stemming from how media currently structure news of rape and sexual violence, and how journalists can better report on these issues (Garcia-Rojas, 2012). The Chicago Taskforce on Violence Against Girls & Young Women was established to be a common ground for groups across Chicago to share strategies and best practices in responding to violence against women and girls. The taskforce provides educational trainings and statistics about violence as well as policy recommendations. Coming from an advocacy-based taskforce, the guide created by this organization is easily understood and is written with specific details. An extensive section dedicated to the potential harms of common language and suggestions for alternate word choice makes up a significant portion of the guide. The structure allows for a reader to not only understand preferred terminology, but to fully comprehend the impact of the commonly accepted words and how it

can be harmful to survivors. Like the GPC's guide, there are tips on how to foster a safe atmosphere for an interview and how to choose details that are appropriate. Unique from GPC's guide is a list of resources for survivors locally and nationally along with both local and national statistics on sexual assault (Garcia-Rojas, 2012). Beyond suggestions, the media guide provides both good and bad examples of articles about sexual assault in order to give the journalist using the guide context for proper use of the suggestions.

Another media guide created by the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA) provides suggestions for national and local media coverage of sexual assault. MNCASA is an advocacy and support group for victims/survivors and allies dedicated to ending sexual violence. Their work promotes victim-centered responses and effective justice systems through policy. MNCASA's media guide is similar to that of the Chicago Taskforce on Violence Against Girls & Young Women with an inclusion of problematic terminology, statistics, and resources for the community to turn to for sexual assault prevention and support (Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, 2013). This media guide includes a section of key concepts that stands out in comparison to other guides as a summary of what sexual assault looks like in contrast to traditionally accepted narratives. Further, this guide has a section dedicated to reminding reporters why their role is important in raising awareness of sexual assault, and why they should report ethically. Suggestions about monitoring content online, such as comments on websites and blogs, brings up a point that previous guides did not: that there is a potential for prolonged impact from the story on the survivor, even after publication (Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, 2013). Similar to the others, this guide includes discussions about rape myths and proper interviewing techniques as well as definitions for common terms.

Both of the previous guides were written for journalists by anti-violence advocacy organizations dedicated to work around sexual assault. Know Your IX is an organization dedicated to empowering students to stop sexual violence at their schools. They also provide a guide for journalists specifically about campus issues related to sexual assault. Similar to Nobert's essay, the Know Your IX guide (Walsh, n.d.) offers broader suggestions and other resources for more information about campus sexual assault. Unlike the media guides created by other anti-violence organizations, this guide points out larger issues to be conscious of without providing suggestions for remediation. Interviewing suggestions and an emphasis on allowing the survivor to tell their own narrative connects this guide to the others.

The comparison of these media guides offer insight to what advocates and experts believe should be present in media coverage of sexual assault. Each discusses the importance of fostering a safe space for interviews and using language that doesn't perpetuate myths. However, there are some pitfalls amongst the guides. The Chicago Taskforce on Violence Against Girls & Young Women's Media Tool Kit, for example, has images featured throughout the guide, but all of them are in black and white and feature disconsolate women and children. Not only does this put the reader in the mindset that sexual assault can be perpetrated only against women, but it also portrays a stereotypical image of an assault victim. Further, this guide and MNCASA's guide do not mention what sources to include in the story. They dictate how to conduct an interview with survivors, but don't mention what other voices are beneficial to use or are harmful to include. The Know Your IX guide for campus-based reporting is missing concrete examples for its suggestions, as well as information about sources. It gives suggestions for other resources should a reporter or survivor need more information, but isn't an effective one-stop for reporting on the subject. Above all, the guides mentioned are missing the voices of survivors within their

suggestions. Other than Nobert's (2016) article in which she discloses that she is a survivor, the guides are written by advocates about a subject with which they may or may not have firsthand experience. While based in literary research, these guides are missing suggestions and voices from survivors that could provide emphasis on important points and elaborate on why a certain suggestion is so important. These guides are centered on the idea that survivors should be in control of their own narrative, yet don't appear to be written from a survivor perspective.

Created by professional journalists and advocacy organizations the guides are tailored for the most part for large-scale media sources within their geographic area, exempting the Know Your IX guide. However, the hyper-local news sources such as campus media are expanding (Collins & Armstrong, 2008) bringing with them new opportunities and challenges especially in the context of covering sexual assault.

Campus media:

For the purpose of this research, the term "campus media" will refer to campus newspapers and their online presence. The majority of college newspapers operate as nonprofit organizations and serve the purpose of training students for a future in journalism (Steel, 2006). Funding arrangements vary from university to university, some receiving funding from student fees while others, like the Daily Tar Heel at UNC-Chapel Hill are independent, relying only on advertising dollars. Independence gives campus news organizations the ability to operate without prior restraint, although the courts have often ruled that even if a paper is funded by a public university, prior review, funding withdraw, limiting circulation and suspending editors are a violation of First Amendment rights (Student Press Law Center, 2016).

Because the news is uniquely relevant to college students, the readership of campus newspapers has held steady, while for other newspapers it has decreased (Steel, 2006). Further

the circulation for these print newspapers has increased while broader-reaching papers have seen a decline (Collins & Armstrong, 2008). One survey showed that 79% of college students had read one of the past five issues of their print campus newspaper, 30% more than those who read national newspapers during the week (Steel, 2006). Campus papers are proving to be resilient news sources compared to other hyperlocal newspapers. One study shows that students were more likely to read their campus newspaper four times a week than they were to read the alternative free daily paper in their area one time a week (Collins & Armstrong, 2008). This is significant considering that the only noticeable difference in the material was who was writing the piece and where it was published, which suggests that readers choose their news for reasons beyond the topic covered.

Not only has readership remained steady, but reading the campus paper is becoming a habit in students' lives. Those who are interested in daily news make it a habit to pick up their campus paper regularly (Tennant & Chyi, 2014). Research on one campus shows that 53% of students studied read the campus newspaper in print, while 48% had visited the website within the last week (Meyer, Speakman, & Garud, 2016). The same study found that turning to the campus paper was an active and more effective media consumption choice, as compared to the consumption of news through social media. This trend of active news consumption isn't new. Rather, Lipschultz and Hilt (1999) concluded that research that "although these students, faculty, and staff have many options, including major national daily newspapers, only a few read anything other than the city daily or the campus newspaper" (p. 1053).

The steady readership is important for news sources to consider, and is grounds for more scholarly research. Just as prominent is the idea that these papers are training grounds for those desiring to enter the journalism field after graduation. Students are the reporters, editors,

designers and photographers for this campus media, but they are also the future of the journalism field. Therefore researchers should be mindful of their training and abilities. For example, Burch and Cozma (2016) compared national news coverage of a political election to that of a student paper, and found that the student paper used more sources than the national outlet. Further the sources used represented greater balance. The national paper relied on official sources that one would expect to hear from, while the campus paper brought in opposing sides and voices from those affected within the community (Burch & Cozma, 2016). According to Lipschultz and Hilt (1999), citizen involvement within a community is based on news' community relevance, collective availability, individual capability and available time. Student papers arguably are able to capitalize on that and provide a news source that is more involved by citing more people and actually being a part of the community.

The previously mentioned study of election coverage found that campus papers were also more likely to use human-interest and issue frames in order to provide relevant information to their readers (Burch & Cozma, 2016). National media focused on horserace framing and coverage that focused on political elites and conflict. The research on campus papers from this study also showed that these student journalists challenged the assumption that journalists must be cozy with political elites to be successful reporters (Burch, & Cozma, 2016)

Because campus newspapers staffs are often made up of and serve students, certain laws limit and support campus reporting in a way that does not apply to other news sources. The Student Press Law Center addresses unprotected rights of student journalists including obscenity, libelous material and material that will cause "material and substantive disruption" to college activities (Student Press Law Center, 2016). Beyond rights guaranteed by the first amendment, there are laws that apply specifically to college campuses. The Family Educational Rights and

Privacy Act (FERPA), for example, limits the amount of information available to student reporters who are covering college-related news. However, there are exceptions that allow for the release of information in certain situations. FERPA prevents the release of identifiable information from a student's educational records without the student's written consent, however exemptions are permitted if the information is deemed to have a legitimate educational interest to teachers, officials and employees of the respective universities, if it is considered directory information, if it is concerning disciplinary action or the results of a final disciplinary proceeding (FERPA Release Exemptions, 2016). Related to the latter exemption-- final disciplinary proceeding, the university is allowed to release the name of the student found guilty of disciplinary action, the rule or policy violated, any essential findings supporting the conclusion of the proceeding, the date, duration and final sanction imposed (FERPA Release Exemptions, 2016). While this information can be released, any information about victims, witnesses or other students involved in the proceeding cannot be disclosed without written consent. Other than the exemptions listed, campus media must operate within the limits of information available to them when covering stories about students. This information is often produced as the result of public records requests.

Because campus media operates in a unique space within the media field, with a specifically targeted audience and particular regulations, it is important to note its connection to major issues like sexual assault. By looking into one specific university's experience, connections between media coverage and campus life can be drawn in order to show a need for more research within this hyper-local media space.

Recent background- Sexual assault at UNC-Chapel Hill:

In 1972, Title IX was passed as a national law that prohibited discrimination and harassment based on protected status, including gender. This law meant that universities were now responsible for adjudicating cases involving discrimination. Immediately, Title IX was applied to equal accessibility of educational and athletic programs for women at UNC-Chapel Hill. In the years following the issue of Title IX, sexual assault was addressed at UNC as an Honor Court violation and consequently a student panel decided the outcome of the case.

An April, 2011 “Dear Colleague” letter issued by the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights to all US schools that receive federal funding stated that sexual assault was a civil rights and criminal issue, not an honor court violation. The letter explained that equal access to education was being denied when schools didn’t treat sexual harassment and violence as a violation of rights. “When a student sexually harasses another student, the harassing conduct creates a hostile environment if the conduct is sufficiently serious that it interferes with or limits a student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the school’s program,” (Ali, 2011, pg. 3) in order to explain why and when a school is required to apply Title IX to assault cases (Ali, 2011). The letter provides definitions for sexual harassment and violence that universities must adopt and lays out proper procedures for reporting and investigating a campus assault. A “preponderance of evidence” standard is mandated by the letter, meaning that a case can be closed with 50 plus one percent certainty, rather than the typically used higher standard of “clear and convincing” evidence (Ciesielski, 2016). Further, it explains that a criminal investigation of sexual violence does not relieve the university’s requirement to also pursue a civil rights complaint under Title IX. According to this letter, there was no other way to handle assault than through Title IX.

After the letter was issued, UNC- Chapel Hill and many other universities had to restructure their hearing process and remove sexual assault from the purview of the Honor Court system. UNC-CH adopted an interim policy in order to decide how to progress (Ciesielski, 2016). However, a Title IX complaint filed by four students and a former administrator in 2013 landed UNC-Chapel Hill on a list of some 200 other colleges and universities that were facing similar federal investigations (Title IX tracking sexual assault investigations, 2016). It also led to a year-long revision of the University's sexual assault policy, which it operates under today.

The revised policy prohibits “discrimination and harassment based on any protected status, sexual assault or sexual violence, sexual exploitation, interpersonal (relationship) violence, stalking, complicity for knowingly aiding in acts of prohibited conduct and retaliation” (Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Related Misconduct Including Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment, Sexual Violence, Interpersonal Violence and Stalking, 2014). Consent was redefined from “words or actions demonstrating a knowing and voluntary agreement to engage in mutually agreed upon sexual activity” to “the communication of an affirmative, conscious, freely-made decision by each participant to engage in agreed upon forms of sexual contact” (UNC Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, 2015, pg. 4) The definition expanded to include that silence, passivity and lack of resistance did not imply consent, and consent could not be affirmed solely based on non-verbal communication (UNC Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, 2015). Incapacitation had been mentioned in the interim policy prior to the one adopted in 2014, but it was not defined. The 2014 policy defined it as a state beyond intoxication, impairment in judgment, or drunkenness and provided ways to assess whether an individual is incapacitated. The new policy requires hearings to be assessed by

faculty and staff, not students, and provides more options for the adjudicating process (UNC Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, 2015).

Under the revised policy, students have a variety of options if they want to report sexual harassment, discrimination, assault or violence. Students can pursue a formal investigation or an informal reporting process through the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC). For a formal investigation, witnesses are interviewed, evidence considered and the decision will determine whether the accused has violated the policy and will face sanctions and remedies. The informal reporting process results in support, accommodations and interim protective measures rather than sanctions that might result from a formal investigation (UNC Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, 2015). The “Dear Colleague letter” not only required universities to change their adjudication processes, but also to make publicly available information regarding how to report, what rights are afforded to students (victims/accusers and accused) and number the of previous reports (Ali, 2011). Under the 1990 Clery Act, publicly funded educational institutions are required to disclose annually the number and type of crime that occur on and near campus. The EOC office at UNC-Chapel Hill aggregates the numbers of reports of sexual discrimination, harassment, assault and other violent crimes in an annual Campus Crime and Security Report that is made publicly available. The office doesn’t separate some but not all of the data in order to protect the privacy of victims (UNC Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, 2015).

As a part of the requirement to guarantee that students and faculty are aware of how to report sexual assault, the EOC office hosts multiple types of trainings that target unique aspects of sexual assault on campus. In January of 2015, not long after the current policy was enacted, all students and faculty were required to complete an online module centered around bystander intervention of sexual assault. The module discussed how to identify sexual and gender-based

violence, how to report and respond to harassment and violence, the requirements of Title IX and related laws, and the University's policy and procedures. Completion of the module is supposed to be required for each student annually (UNC Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, 2015).

Multiple other forms of training are also available on UNC-Chapel Hill's campus including One Act for bystander intervention, Helping Advocates for Violence Ending Now (HAVEN) centered on how to be a compassionate listener to someone who was assaulted, Safe Zone to create a network of allies for those who may feel marginalized based on sexual orientation and Delta Advocates to be a resource on educating members of Greek life on how to report and be aware of assault and interpersonal violence. Beyond the existing programs, a prevention task force was initiated in April of 2015 to create a five-year strategic plan to preventing sexual harassment and violence (UNC Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, 2015).

The policy undergoes "constant review", according to Christi Hurt the Assistant Vice Chancellor/Chief of Staff for Student Affairs and leader of the 2013 Sexual Assault Task Force to revise the policy (Pellicer & Stasio, 2016). The UNC School of Social Work began research in fall 2016 to collect the opinions and evaluations of students who were affected by the new policy to determine what worked and what fell short. Just as this review got underway, student Delaney Robinson accused UNC football player Allen Artis of sexual assault and the University for mishandling her complaint, lodged in February. At a press conference in September, Robinson and her attorney said that under University policy, she was promised a decision within 90 days of opening the investigation through the Title IX office, but had still heard nothing despite repeated requests for an update on the status of her case. Robinson's attorney said that her case

represented a complete violation of the policy of which the University was proud of (Sims & Owens, 2016).

Following Robinson's press conference, the Daily Tar Heel began anew a series covering sexual assault on campus and brought to light their multiple year-long pursuit of public records containing information that would provide detail beyond annual Campus Crime and Security Report. According to Jane Wester, the editor-in-chief of the DTH, they are looking for expanded data reports because there's no way to fully comprehend if the new policy is working without explicit examples. The DTH made a request for these records on September 30, 2016 and set a deadline for the university to respond by October 28, 2016. The University once again denied the request for records citing survivor privacy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as reasons the information would not be given (Jackson, 2016). FERPA has exceptions for situations where a student has allegedly "perpetrated a crime of violence or non-forcible sex offense and, has been found, by that conduct to have violated University rules or policies" (FERPA Release Exemptions, 2016). By this exception, universities are allowed to release the student's name, the policy violated, essential findings of the conclusion, the sanction imposed, the date of the sanction and the duration of time.

At the same time as the DTH requested public records and began a news series dedicated to covering sexual assault on the UNC-CH campus, student advocates began to protest the University's reaction to Delaney Robinson's public case. UNC Siren, a student-produced publication held the protest to call attention to the university's apparent lack of sympathy for survivors (Bailey, 2016). Two seniors, Emma Johnson and Hannah Petersen (the author of this research) held a listening forum in which survivors of sexual assault read their stories to members of University administration. The event, "Our Story," culminated in the formation of a

committee that will work alongside administrators to inform and shape sexual assault policy at UNC-CH. The committee, The Carolina Sexual Assault Coalition, operates within student government and alongside the Office of the Vice Chancellors currently. Project Dinah, a UNC organization dedicated to raising awareness of sexual assault and supporting survivors followed, “Our Story,” with its annual Speak Out! Against Interpersonal Violence event as a part of Interpersonal Violence Awareness Month.

These efforts at UNC to combat campus sexual assault build on the work of previous activist and journalists. Annie Clark and Andrea Pino, two of the students involved in filing the 2013 Title IX complaint, used social networking to connect with and mobilize students across the nation to fight sexual assault (Perez-Pena, 2013). Pino and Clark’s Title IX case is still under investigation, and during the time that it has been filed, both women co-founded an organization, End Rape on Campus, to support survivors, work towards prevention, and address policy reform on campuses.

This year, student advocates across campus have rallied in response to Robinson’s case and the ongoing Title IX investigation. The atmosphere of activism coupled with prominent national cases and a relatively new sexual misconduct policy positions UNC-Chapel Hill as an area of interest when it comes to the study of media and sexual assault. Further, the Daily Tar Heel is independent of the university, active in covering sexual assault and currently requesting public to strengthen its reporting on the issue. For these reasons, UNC-Chapel Hill serves as an excellent geographic and population base needed intentionally explore campus media involvement with sexual assault.

Research shows that rape myths lead to a distorted perception of what sexual assault is as well as lead to fewer convictions of perpetrators of the crime (Franiuk et al., 2008). When media

advance these rape myths, it can adversely affect the outcome of cases and public perception of sexual assault. Feminist scholars have attempted to shift the narrative to become more survivor focused, and organizations and professional journalists have created guides in order to aid reporters. However, campus media is an understudied media space growing in influence and is setting the stage for future journalists. College aged individuals are more vulnerable to sexual assault (The White House Council on Women and Girls, 2014), and the crossover between journalist and subject is prominent on campus. This project addresses gaps in the professional recommendations which when paired with the background knowledge of pervasive media coverage, the prominence of sexual assault on campus and the growth of campus media, has led to the research questions this project is centered around. Specifically this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How do sexual assault survivors understand campus media coverage of the issue and how do they view their role within it?

RQ2: How do campus journalists train for and approach covering sexual assault and what might their concerns be when covering the issue?

CHAPTER 3 - Methods

In order to examine how survivors and journalists understand their role within campus media coverage of sexual assault, this study consisted of in-depth interviews with individuals from both groups on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Scholars have pointed to the importance of interviewing in order to collect qualitative data, including McCracken (1988), who noted that, “for certain descriptive and analytic purposes, no instrument of inquiry is more revealing” (pg. 9). Interviews allow a researcher to gather a large amount of relevant information about different perspectives created by unique experiences (Brennen, 2013). Rather than gathering data on how prevalent a concept is or how far-reaching an experience could be, interviewing provides insight into how one subset of culture perceives the world (McCracken, 1988). Since this study explores the experiences and perspectives of survivors and journalists, determining this cultural connection is vital. Interviewing gives the researcher the ability to explore phenomena or perspectives that may be invisible without conversation (Tracy, 2013). This project consists of in-depth semi-structured interviews with both survivors of sexual assault and journalists for the campus newspaper, the Daily Tar Heel (DTH). A semi-structured interview allows for flexibility and in-depth purposeful conversations that find meaning in issues, emotions and concerns, but are based in a pre-established set of questions (Brennen, 2013). The semi-structured nature allows for tangents and side conversation to come out of a single question that could add meaning or context to the original answer (Brennen, 2013). Because of the emotional subject of sexual assault, or the media coverage of sexual assault, these types of side conversations proved vital to understanding the perspectives of the individuals being interviewed.

Subjects that were interviewed for this study were selected based on past or current experiences with sexual assault or media coverage of the issue. In order to truly gain knowledge about their perspective, conversation about the past and their vision for the future will be necessary. Nearly 90 percent of social science research projects consist at least partially of interviews (Tracy, 2013), because of their ability to situate data in a way that is purposeful and human oriented. Due to the semi-structured format, a general list of topic areas and a set of open-ended questions was used, the content of the interview lead to follow-up questions as well as side conversations that provided necessary context or emotions.

The sample collection began with personal connections and e-mails sent out to journalists, as well as recruitment through the Carolina Women's Center, a resource for those who have experienced gender based violence on campus. As I have previously stated, I am deeply connected to sexual assault advocacy at UNC-Chapel Hill and I myself identify as a survivor of sexual assault. These two positions granted me access to a network of survivors on UNC-Chapel Hill's campus. Further, as a journalism student, I am connected to journalists including those with a particular interest in covering sexual assault. Recruitment efforts were held from the last week of January and February 2017 and were limited to personal connections, e-mails and recommendations from the Carolina Women's Center. During my initial contact with the participants, I stated the purpose of the research and the participants' rights to remain confidential during the interview process. Each participant was also given a copy of the IRB consent form during initial contact so they were fully aware of the study's intention. They were also given ample time to consider their participation between initial contact and interview. Participants were interviewed at least a week after I contacted them. Interviews were held during the entire month of February 2017. Each participant had the option to select when and where

they were most comfortable meeting for the interview. Most did not have a preference, and a room within the School of Media and Journalism was used as an interview location in those situations. Three participants, who identified as survivors, were interviewed in their homes. One survivor asked to change the interview location from campus to her home. She had seen her perpetrator on campus and didn't feel comfortable being interviewed there.

At the beginning of each interview, I summarized the study for the participants by discussing the purpose, explaining I would use audio recordings and going over guidelines and protocols of the interview itself. As a part of the guidelines, I told participants, "You are free to end the interview at any time" and "If there is anything you wish to not respond to, simply notify me and we can move on." I told interviews that their identity would be kept confidential and asked them to sign not only the IRB consent form, but also a form indicating their confidentiality rights. I assigned a letter to each participant and indicated the letter on their confidentiality form. The letter was randomly generated through an online letter generator and if the participant was unhappy with the assigned letter, I gave them a new letter. I used each participant's identifying letter as a source of attribution in the thesis and my notes on the interviews. The letter was also used to save the interview recordings and notes under. Only my advisor and I had access to the form linking their name to the letter. The letter was used to attribute quotes and data to each participant while ensuring confidentiality.

After this introductory stage, I began asking questions from the interview guide. I asked the journalists and the survivors different questions because I was aiming at answering different aspects of my research questions. All of the questions were centered around understanding media coverage of sexual assault and any tangents to answers were initiated by the interviewee not in the form of follow up questions from myself. For example, if a survivor answered a question and

gave a statement about her own personal experience to discuss why she felt that way, I allowed her to digress from the answer to give her story. However, I did not initiate conversation other than through questions from the interview guide. In order to accommodate to the sensitivity of these issues, I regularly checked in with interviewees to make sure participants were aware that they were free to take a break or stop the interview at any point. The interviews varied in length with the shortest lasting 33 minutes and the longest lasting one hour and 20 minutes.

The interviews informed me on topics directly related to my research questions as well as gave me an understanding of others' perspectives on the topic of media coverage of sexual assault. The interviews were respondent-centered because of the unique stories the questions brought to light. I took partial transcriptions of the interviews in order to illuminate trends, key findings and specific quotes that helped answer how survivors and journalists understand and feel their position within campus media coverage of sexual assault is. I found it important to take partial transcriptions myself so that I could eliminate identifying information that the participants may have stated, whether intentionally or unintentionally. I conducted the transcriptions myself so as to protect the privacy of those being interviewed. The interview recordings as well as the partial transcriptions were saved to a designated file on the UNC server through the consistent use of and connection to UNC Internet by a VPN. This ensured confidentiality from the larger public in case any of the participants revealed identifying information during the interview. Once I had completed the partial transcription of the interviews, I analyzed the transcripts using grounded theory, sorting the comments by topic and relating them to their larger connection in media coverage. Information from the interviews was also used to make recommendations for future campus journalists on how to more carefully, accurately and ethically report on campus sexual assault. These recommendations, partnered with suggestions from professional media

organizations and prior research on news coverage of sexual assault were organized into a best practices guide to help campus journalists who may not have firsthand experience with sexual assault or may not have received specialized training on how to be sensitive to or knowledgeable of the issue. The guide is attached in the appendix of this thesis.

There are several aspects of my background that certainly influenced these interviews as well as my analysis of the findings. For the past year, I have participated in advocacy around sexual assault at UNC-Chapel Hill. A good friend and I hosted the event, Our Story in the fall of 2016 where 21 survivors shared their story with an audience of 400 students and prominent administration. I am also the co-founder of the Carolina Sexual Assault Coalition, a committee of survivors and allies that work alongside student government and the Office of the Vice Chancellors to raise awareness, implement prevention strategies, and change policy surrounding sexual assault on campus. Further, I acknowledge that I am a survivor of campus sexual assault. While I believe that this allowed me to better connect with my participants, as well as allowed them to feel comfortable speaking with me, I recognize that this influenced my understanding of what participants said. My own experience, as well as the experiences I have heard of through my advocacy work, has fueled a passion for change out of which the idea for this thesis arose. It is also relevant to discuss my race and gender identity in reference to my interpretation of my research. As a white, heterosexual cis-gendered woman, I have been granted inherent privilege to speak out on issues of sexual assault, not only in my advocacy work, but also through the writing of this thesis. At no point did I experience questioning for why I thought this work was important. I also have never come in contact with someone who suggested my participants could be lying or that I should be skeptical about their experiences. I was never discouraged from speaking out against sexual assault and was never told that this research was not relevant to the

larger social picture. I believe and acknowledge wholeheartedly that this may not be the case for all individuals conducting research on or advocating for victims of gender-based violence.

CHAPTER 4 – Findings and Discussion

The final sample of this research consisted of nine individuals; three who were identified as journalists by their bylines in articles published by the Daily Tar Heel (DTH) and six who identified as survivors of sexual assault. Eight of the nine participants were currently enrolled at UNC-Chapel Hill, and one had recently finished graduate school at the University. All participants identified as female using she/her/hers pronouns, and all but two of the participants were white. This is important to mention because of the intersectionality that comes to play in sexual assault cases and how often voices of minorities are missing from the conversation. Persons of color well as those who identify as LGBTQ experience higher rates of assault as well as lower rates of reporting (RAINN, Human Rights Campaign). This results in predominantly white female voices leading the conversation about sexual assault. White women have not traditionally experienced push back when they speak about their rights or experiences, something that was nationally evident in the January 2017 Women's March on Washington. This research is no exception, and the consequences of that are further discussed in the conclusion of this thesis. The lack of demographic diversity does not correlate with diversity of sexual assault experiences, however. Gathered from what participants willingly disclosed without prompting, the participants had experiences ranging from the traditional definition of rape to unsolicited touching. The range of experiences is important because people are often unaware of how diverse sexual assault experiences are and how much an unsolicited act can impact a survivor. Finally, the journalists interviewed had different experience levels ranging from staff reporter to editor yet had all covered sexual assault in some capacity.

This thesis sought to answer two primary research questions centered around campus media coverage of sexual assault. The questions were:

RQ1: How do sexual assault survivors understand campus media coverage of the issue and how do they view their role within it?

RQ2: How do campus journalists train for and approach covering sexual assault and what might their concerns be when covering the issue?

In order to answer these questions, qualitative interviews based on a question guide created specifically for either journalists or survivors were conducted. With the research questions guiding the creation of an interview guide, I was able to uncover trends associated with both campus journalists and survivors in how they see their role within media coverage and how their concerns for future coverage should be addressed. The purpose of this research was to answer the two questions with the intention of creating a best practices guide that campus journalists could then use when covering sexual assault in the future.

Sexual assault survivor's viewpoints and understanding of media coverage of the issue:

Of the nine interviews, six participants identified as survivors, and this section discusses how those participants understand media coverage of sexual assault. All (except the participant identified here as D,) were quick to answer that neither campus media nor national news accurately depicts sexual assault. D was the only exception to this and her first reaction was that when media is discussing stranger rape, they do so accurately. All of the participants were skeptical of the media's accuracy as well as their lack of representation of a diverse range of sexual assault stories. The survivors understood that media face complex decisions when writing about the topic, but ultimately media have a responsibility to those who it writes stories about and should prioritize the individuals affected by the stories' publication. By discussing what they found important about sexual assault and what they would want the outside world to know about the issue, the survivors shared what they felt should be the goals of media coverage of sexual

assault. Ranging from resource education to the effects of trauma, the survivors explained that there is a lot of information about sexual assault that could progress society's understanding of the issue that media currently don't cover. By sharing their readership habits, preferences of story topics and knowledge of how media operate, the survivors provided insight into their viewpoint and understanding of sexual assault in the media: information that will prove useful to journalists who are considering their audience and sources in the future.

To express their opinions of media coverage of sexual assault, survivors gave statements such as, "Campus media only puts sexual assault stories in the paper to get more people to read it. Media can make sexual assault seem like it has to be a stranger or some creepy old man, and it doesn't always look like that" (X), "Quotes are skewed and misinterpreted and the stories are written in such a way for the blame to be put on the victim" (C), and "Media make it seem like there's a small amount of perpetrators and that when it does happen, it's dealt with properly, that's not the case" (T). Q said, "People perceive rare events to be more common than they are because the rare events are reported on more and the common events aren't even reported about at all." Even though she believed one side of media coverage was accurate, D later stated that, "Ultimately there is a lack in representation of different types of assault and that contributes to the misunderstanding to what assault actually is."

Even though the initial reactions of the participants suggested that campus media depictions were not accurate, few of the participants seemed hostile toward campus media for the inaccuracy. Rather, each participant acknowledged the complexity of covering the topic by discussing the perpetrator's due process rights as well as the fear of being sued for slander. Nearly every survivor mentioned that reports on assaults leave out details that would be vital to understanding the truth in the survivor's story. The participants were capable of seeing multiple

sides of the media's decisions; however, they concluded that when media doesn't make a survivor focused decision, survivors are isolated and the public is misguided. T said, "I get that there's a court and a rule that says innocent until proven guilty, but I think a lot of the time, media doubts the survivor without giving the same doubt to the perpetrator." Q mirrored that perspective by saying, "I know in a court of law, things need to be balanced, but I don't think reporters should include things that assassinate the character of the survivor in order to reach those terms." C explained that the conflict between law and journalism can be insulting to survivors by stating, "I know that the perpetrator is innocent until he's convicted, but to me, that is insulting to leave that much leeway for students who are reading this on campus to decide whether he did or didn't do this." Finally, D said, "It's one thing to be objective and try to report on all angles that you can, but as someone who has done the digging myself, it didn't feel like all the information was there, it felt like the reporters were trying to distance themselves from what was going on," in reference to an article published by The DTH.

Survivors also noted that these complexities were different than those that faced national news coverage of sexual assault. Q felt that journalists working for campus media were more likely to care about and be educated on the topic of sexual assault than journalists working for national news outlets. Using the 2016 coverage of Delaney Robinson's case as an example, S explained that the campus paper had an obligation to listen to the community's request for specifics and follow the story where most places wouldn't necessarily be required to do so. Both T and D acknowledged that national news sources weren't aware of the sensitivities including recent cases, Title IX complaints, and student activism on UNC-CH's campus specifically. Because of that D stated, "I get angry because the people who are covering the issue are so close to the issue and are not covering it differently."

D also said, “It’s unique to have student written news in a place that you identify as being a student. The statistic you hear most often is that one in four women will experience sexual assault during their college years, so you would expect that with writers that are in college there would be some camaraderie there. But their coverage doesn’t seem any different than national coverage.”

T stated, “There’s a lot more sexism in the national coverage,” which was an opinion shared by Q as well. However, each participant had suggestions for better coverage as they discussed the purpose of campus media coverage of sexual assault.

Several of the participants believed that educating people about sexual assault and how it is presented on a college campus should be a goal of campus media. Participants C, D, Q, T and X said this should include context surrounding the survivor’s decision to report or open an investigation, the legal system complexities, an analysis of the different types of assault, as well as why some people are comfortable talking about the topic and others are not. C said, “I need to see more about what it really is, not the bruises and cuts and rape kits. I need a more holistic view of how many people choose not to report and why they choose not to report.” Q adds that the public currently misses so much of a survivor’s decision-making process because of what the media portray as sexual assault.

“Media create this image, that people believe, in which rape is something where someone you don’t know attacks you out of nowhere, so you immediately go get help. That’s not the case because most of the cases are people who you know, which already adds in this huge factor. You have to ask yourself, ‘Do I do anything about it?’ The burden is really on you. It’s a lot more complicated than it is portrayed to be. I want the public to also know how complicated the legal

system is. People always jump to saying that she should have gone to the police, but they have no clue what they are talking about. The likelihood of your case going to trial is slim to none.” (Q).

Many of the participants also stated that the media should cover sexual assault with the purpose of showing the community the effects an assault can have on an individual. Some (T, S, Q, D) stated that this could foster a better understanding of trauma, while others (X, C) thought it could remedy the feeling of isolation survivors often have as well as help allies understand a friend’s experience. D explained that she wanted the emotional aftermath to be a reason to cover sexual assault because it is often overlooked by media, while simultaneously being the most traumatic for survivors. “The aftermath is in a lot of ways a lot more important than the actual event. That was in some ways, worse than what happened, which is weird, but true none the less. Being thorough in reporting that part of the story would be important to me, because that was the hardest part,” (D). X discussed how the aftermath can set a survivor on a path they will be on for the rest of their lives. She stated, “It’s interesting to hear about what people do after they are assaulted. A lot turn to drugs and alcohol and have sex a lot. But there are also factors like if you weren’t using protection, then you are more likely to get a disease. There’s the cost of therapy and dealing with medication and your grades falling. Not only are you going through trauma, but you’re also trying to keep your life together,” (X).

Another major point that the survivors thought media should focus on in their coverage is educating both the public and other survivors on resources. Participant, S stated, “I would want them to talk about the lack of accessible resources. We have the resources on campus, but they are not accessible in a way that will fit a student’s lifestyle.” This was reinforced by X who said, “I would want to see sexual assault being talked about without it being tied to a survivor. It’s

important to talk about it before it reaches that point.” X’s comment about discussing sexual assault without the narrative of a survivor is an important point, because it suggests that the conversation of sexual assault can be applied in many ways that the media often miss. If media don’t want to make resources the focal point of the story, many of the survivors claimed that a list of resources should still be listed at the end of the article. Q said, “They should include resources for help whenever they write about sexual assault. At UNC-CH, they could say here are campus resources, but could also give national resources.”

By analyzing the responses to questions centered around the survivor’s understanding of media coverage of sexual assault, it becomes evident that survivors provide a unique perspective in why media should cover the topic as well as the consequences of its publishing. The survivors acknowledge that campus media faces legal challenges, but because the journalists are students they expect to have tailored and unique coverage of sexual assault. Their understanding of media is that currently it is inaccurate when covering the topic, but the survivors’ perspectives provide information on how and why they engage with media as well as recommendations for improving coverage.

The standpoint of a sexual assault survivors and how it influences their engagement with campus media coverage of sexual assault:

The second part of research question one focused on the survivor’s interpretation of their role within campus media coverage of sexual assault. Within the interviews, survivors discussed their readership habits as well as why they engage with media about the topic and how they should be treated when doing so. Many expressed they would only engage with media if it would help another, a feasible task according to them as survivors avidly follow news coverage of sexual assault. They discussed conditions they would expect if they were to be interviewed by

the media about their assault and language they would prefer to be used as a way of communicating their understanding of their own role within media coverage to me. By mentioning the difference in the terms “survivor” and “victim,” the survivors were able to express that terminology is important and in order to truly understand which word to use, a journalist must think like a survivor. Most of the participants had experienced some interaction with media; however, none had had their assault experience reported about in detail. All but two had talked with the campus or local media about sexual assault before, even if they hadn’t given a full recount of their experience. The interactions with media as well as stories their friends have shared with them shaped their perceptions of why and how they engage with coverage of sexual assault.

Media readership. The trends in how survivors read media, especially media coverage of sexual assault provide insight into how they view their role within media coverage of the topic. From this perspective, they are the critics of the coverage while simultaneously being the ones affected by the publication. In the conversation of media readership, the survivors explained that survivors track media coverage, which affects not only their mental health, but also they social engagement with others.

All but one of the participants read the Daily Tar Heel semi-regularly and were familiar with its coverage of sexual assault. However, none of the participants treated the DTH as their “go to” media source. D said that she reads it because it reflects her own views and the views of the community around her. Q reads the DTH “to see the big things that are going on within UNC-CH’s campus.” T indicated that she didn’t read it every day, but if a topic she is interested in is being discussed, she will read it “to see how it is portrayed.” The interviewees indicated that

they turn to social media or other sources of local news, such as the News and Observer for their daily news. S stated that she doesn't keep up with daily news at all.

Despite the variance in readership of campus news, all of the participants have one thing in common; they all keep up with news on sexual assault. Some adopted that habit immediately following their assaults, while others are only recently paying attention to news on the topic. "Once you are assaulted, you really tune into any coverage of sexual assault," said C. Even S who stated she doesn't keep up with daily news said, "I do follow sexual assault stories," and proceeded to mention the multitude of cases she had heard of before national papers had even covered them. Other participants discussed the social media accounts they follow and radio stations they listen to in the car and in their homes. They receive news about the topic that way. It was participant D that indicated a shift from the group by saying, "For a while, I actively sought to not encounter any sort of news coverage about sexual assault whether it be campus based or otherwise." However, D said that she now regularly keeps up with media coverage of sexual assault.

Three of the participants indicated that people first hear about sexual assault in the news. The other three participants cite personal experience, culture and their education as the ways they were introduced to the topic. X was one of the participants who indicated media coverage was the primary way; however, she also said, "It's not something that you read up on until it affects you personally or someone in your life." Similarly, Q said, "You hear about sexual assault in the media, but it's sort of this abstract thing until it happens to you or a friend." This is significant because, the way people first learn about sexual assault seems to be related to the reason survivors find themselves involved with media.

Media involvement. As a whole, the survivors were clear about what they would expect should they ever be personally involved in media coverage of sexual assault. By stating that they would only do so if it would help another person, it became evident that the survivors had drive and hesitations that other sources may not have. The drive to help others directly conflicts with a need to protect themselves from retaliation or legal ramifications.

A few of the survivors clearly stated why they would decide to talk with media about their assault. C said, “the reason we are reporting to the media is not in the hopes that our case will be better, but that the next person’s case will be better.” This parallels D’s statement: “The only reason I ever tell my story is to make a change. I don’t simply want to relive it, it was a horrible part of my life.” X also discussed that she would talk about her experience only if the angle of the article would help people in the future. She said she would talk “if the things I struggled with could help someone else and we could talk about what I needed in those moments and what the university could do to make it better” (X). However, a couple other survivors gave reasoning for why they wouldn’t want a whole news story dedicated to their experience. “Life goes on, that’s something that is always going to be a part of me, but my life didn’t end because of that,” said T. Meanwhile, S argued that there are many identifying parts to her story, that she wouldn’t be able to do an interview, even anonymously, because her family threatened to cut her off financially. “My education is more important than him being served a punishment,” said S.

Expectations for treatment by media. Whether giving an interview about their experience, or about sexual assault in general, the survivors had expectations on how they should be treated and what they would need in order to share their perspective. Anonymity and prior review were requested by nearly every survivor, which indicates that because the topic is so

difficult to talk with, the survivors would feel more comfortable if the journalists could provide accommodations.

Every participant mentioned that granting anonymity was necessary, if not for them personally, than as a recommendation for other survivors. C said, “It doesn’t matter what my name is. It does not add or detract from what happened to me” in order to explain why anonymity not only makes survivors feel safe, but it also doesn’t hinder the story. Four of the survivors also said that they would want to be able to read some of the content before publishing. Each acknowledged the controversy behind this request with statements such as “Asking for another round of consent from the interviewee lessens the chance that the material will be published because they can take it back,” (D), but ultimately each of the four said that it would make them more comfortable and more likely to share their experience in more detail. “Knowing that I would be allowed to review it would compel me to give everything I can muster to make sure the story is truthful, complete and as journalistically valuable as it could be,” said D.

Suggestions for journalists. There were other suggestions the survivors made for media coverage of sexual assault. Ranging from discussions on interview techniques to whether photographs should be allowed to a required understanding that trauma can make someone sound unsure, the survivors brought up points that journalists should know and expect to comply with when using a survivor as a source for a story. The importance of respect, but emotional connection was mentioned by nearly all participants, as was the notion that the survivors did not need the journalist to fix their situation or offer unrequested advice. These suggestions serve useful to the compilation of a best practices guide because of their simple yet urgent nature.

The interview should go beyond the surface level in order to humanize the survivor, but shouldn’t get too personal as to where the survivor might feel uncomfortable with the details

being discussed (X). If there is a camera involved, especially video, the interviewee should be told beforehand or at least asked before the camera is turned on (X, T). Before the interview starts, the interviewer should be transparent and explain the purpose of the story, where it will go and any legal obligations they are required to follow through with (C, D, Q, S, T, X). During the interview, it is imperative that the reporter does not push the survivor to answer anything they are uncomfortable answering (C, D, Q, S, T, X) and understands that trauma can make it hard to talk about the subject, so interviewees may come off as “wishy washy” (Q). Every participant said that journalists should not question the survivor about details of their experience and should understand that there is no motivation for a survivor to lie, unlike a perpetrator (D). Further, according to every participant, reporters should never make suggestions either during the interview or in the written piece. “If you ever wrote about what I could have done differently, that would be the worst thing you could do to me,” said C while explaining what journalists should not do.

Several survivors mentioned that the media are not therapists, and that survivors don’t need consoling when discussing their experience (X, C). Both S and C argued that coverage would have to be continued, not simply one sensational story. They both said that should go for all coverage of sexual assault, not just their own. S said, “It’s important to show the whole story because without it, we can’t see if she was served justice and if he was given some sort of punishment.” C mirrored S’s concerns and said, “I would really like to see continued coverage of sexual violence cases. Follow up with the stories instead of simply making a sensationalist issue because the survivors came forward and had a press conference.” She discussed the latest case at UNC-CH where Robinson came forward and her press conference was on the front page of the campus paper, but the next day the football win was featured. Robinson’s case was against a

football player. T, S and Q discussed the importance of understanding reactions survivors may have during the interview. “People have different responses to sexual assault. Even the same person over time will have different responses to it. Know that is a possibility and be ok with that,” said T.

One participant also discussed placement of the article within the newspaper and the impact that can have. “They need to sit down and ask themselves, what does it mean when we don’t put a story like this on the front page? What does it mean when people can walk by the papers and not know that there is a piece on sexual assault in there? The lack of visibility tells others who aren’t as connected to the issue, that the issue isn’t there,” said D.

Discussion of emotional connection and objectivity. The next topic that the survivors thought was important for journalists who write about sexual assault and one that would serve controversial with the journalist perspective, was the need for journalists to be emotionally present. In comparison to the well-accepted norm of pursuing objectivity in a news story (Durham, 1998), the survivors stated that campus journalists are unable and shouldn’t be able to be objective about this subject. Rather, they wish for signs that show the journalist is emotionally connected and is attempting to understand the trauma they have gone through. Without that understanding, the survivors felt that the journalist would miss the full impact and consequently miss the truth in the story.

A few of the participants (C, D, S) indicated they would prefer the journalist to show genuine interest and become emotionally invested in the piece not only so that they would feel comfortable, but also because the issue is sensitive and “you have to let yourself feel it or else it’s really not accurate” (D). C’s viewpoint was similar when she said, “Unless it happens to you, you really can’t grasp and get a feel of what it feels like. You can care and you can be an ally,

but if you want to report and get our voices out there, you need to be open to seeing what we feel”. C later added, “Everyone else has to be so neutral with us, from the administrators to the people in our hearings. Try and support your story with statistics that at least show we aren’t lying. Get in the mindset of how hard and painful this is so that you can write in a way that honors that pain.” S argued that you have to be an empathetic listener in these stories, because there is automatically a power hierarchy that places an interviewer above the survivor and without acknowledging that, the survivor becomes afraid of judgment.

This emotional connection is in contrast to a traditional model of objective journalism (Durham, 1998). The survivors explained that the journalist would not know their full side of the story, if he/she was not willing to try and feel the trauma that they were going through. Without the trauma and the emotional toll that it can inflict, a sexual assault story would be inaccurate, according to the survivors. By suggesting that journalists willingly take on emotions and personally invest themselves in the story, the survivors indicated that they wanted journalists to not only believe them, but to acknowledge that what they as journalists are currently striving for in objectivity is in fact bias that silences the truth in their stories. “This coverage is very subjective to their personal standpoints and what they think sexual assault is and how it can happen. When a news story switches, which is often does, from support to ‘oh she was lying’ that’s the reporter’s subjectivity coming in to the story. You weren’t there, you don’t know,” said S. The lack of objectivity extends to how the individual story was framed. T mentioned that often media shows one case that’s not put in context, which makes the reporter look insensitive to what the actual problem is. Further, X discussed that media often attempts to show the other side and makes false reports more common than they are, which can lead the population to jump to an inaccurate conclusion when a sexual assault case comes forward. D brought up the idea that

campus media actually shows bias in their attempts to be objective. “In order to not show a bias against victims or survivors, or future victims or future survivors, they need to ask how they are presenting this information and what is the information that other students who aren’t in tune to the issue are getting.” She also said, “Placing these stories not on the front page or not where they can be viewed easily is in itself a biased decision.”

Half of the survivors suggested that media should look at recent coverage of politics as an example for how an organization can take a stance for or against an issue, and still be considered valid sources of news. “Look at coverage of the 2016 election and how newspapers unprecedentedly took a stance for or against Donald Trump. I think there is a time that makes sense to say that we don’t support this person or situation,” said D. This statement parallels one the C gave; “The news does an excellent job covering politics and making sure a reader knows where an idea starts and leads to. They give a full understanding of the story. I don’t think that’s how sexual violence is covered.” In order to engage with the truth, the survivors believe you have to emotionally connect to the story. “We need an ear to listen and that’s the beauty of being a journalist, you have that power,” said C. “Every time that a story is put in the crease of a newspaper or on the second page, every time you don’t put the story on the front page, it’s a missed opportunity for change. We are all fighting the same fight here as college students. If you are claiming you want to hold the university accountable to its survivors, you need to be supporting survivors with your writing,” said D. Further on the realm of objectivity, S mentioned that journalists are in charge of classifying what becomes news worthy. “We can name the gun killings that happened each year. We can name the terrorist attacks. We can name all the times a liberal stood up to defend rights. But we can’t name how many times a woman was raped or a woman was sexually assaulted. We are so unable to see what’s happening right in front of our

eyes because it isn't written about," said S. When news sources attempt to balance stories with doubt and contradicting sources, survivors are further deterred from coming forward with their experiences (S). S explained that when you see news coverage that doesn't discuss the whole story from a survivor perspective, "you think of your own experience and explain to yourself that this is why you made the decisions that you did." The three survivors that mentioned objectivity suggest that the attempt to remain objective through emotional distancing is silencing and marginalizing.

Suggestions for language. The final piece that survivors indicated was important in media coverage of sexual assault was the language used to describe not only them, but also their experiences. They felt that their experiences had given them an alternate and more truthful understanding of the words often used to describe their assaults. By making suggestions on what words to use as well as how to comprehend the words, the survivors provided tips for journalists on how to intentionally understand the significance of their words.

All but one identified as a survivor, stating that they would prefer to be called a survivor in media coverage. S was the exception and she said that she never identified with either survivor or victim, but if she had to choose she would select one based on the context of the situation. D mentioned that she didn't always identify as a survivor and every time she uses a word to describe herself, it's an intentional decision of what word to use. "I remember the point in which I started identifying as a survivor and not a victim. Every time I say those words, it is a conscious decision," said D. The participants also indicated that the word rape and sexual assault meant different things, sexual assault being more inclusive to other forms of sexual violence other than sexual penetration (D, C, T). However, S mentioned that rape is used more commonly used in society, often not in the right context. Another term that was discussed was what language to call

the perpetrator. “Some people might not feel like they’ve gotten attacked,” said D to explain why journalists should be careful when deciding between perpetrator and attacker. D also suggested that because the word rape carries a certain amount of weight with it, the word rapist has an incredible amount of power that a journalist could leverage. Each participant said that the journalist should default to the survivor on what language to use because of the importance a single term can carry. “The term sexual assault undergoes this transformation once you’ve experienced it and it means something so incredibly much. All of these words take on different meanings,” said D who also suggested that journalists “need to understand this terminology like a survivor does” for it to be a truthful depiction of the event.

Summary. The survivors interviewed understood that campus media have a unique platform in which they can invoke change; however, they aren’t doing so in a way that meets survivor expectations. The survivors made suggestions on what the goals of media coverage of sexual assault should be as well as what they would expect to happen should they ever discuss their experience with the media. From the discussion of requesting anonymity to the desire for journalists to respect the pain they are experiencing, the survivors listed out specific requests that should be considered in media coverage of this topic. As an answer to research question one, it appears that survivors understand campus media coverage of sexual assault to currently be inadequate, but with survivor-based suggestions, could be a platform for progressive discussion about the topic. They view their role as a critical audience of media coverage as well as an affected subject either directly by being a source in the story or indirectly by reading the published content. Whether they are the survivors being written about or not, each has the possibility of being affected by media coverage of the topic. Therefore, campus journalists and

the wider campus community would do well to honor the statements made by the survivors in this research as they explain a standpoint that the external community cannot understand.

How campus journalists train for and approach covering sexual assault:

The second research question sought to understand the journalists' perspective when it comes to media coverage of sexual assault. Three journalists at the Daily Tar Heel were interviewed, and each journalist had covered or been an editor for a sexual assault story in some manner. They had a range of experience from covering an event to talking with individual survivors about sexual assault. The perspectives of the journalists provided insight into their viewpoint of the media they produce. Throughout their interviews, the journalists spoke of the things they did well, such as liberally granting anonymity, and the things they could improve on, such as being more accessible to survivors. Their approaches to covering sexual assault included interview tactics as well as self-care habits; important topics when preparing for future coverage.

When addressing training, the responses were varied, but it is evident that they were not specifically trained for covering sexual assault. Broad orientation training mixed with personal experience that comes with writing sensitive articles over time appears to be the extent of the training that the journalists receive. Each participant said that a sexual assault story would not be given to a new staff member or new writer. "We try to strike a balance between journalists who have written about this topic before and giving them a break," said N. Every journalist for the DTH goes through an orientation training, according to N. However, according to the other journalists interviewed, there was not a specific training for those who cover sexual assault (A, B). B said that she wished the knowledge that experienced writers had would be shared with the greater organization in the form of a sensitivity workshop or detailed training. According to N

and A, editors discuss the story with their staff and ask experienced writers if they would be comfortable writing about sexual assault.

As for approaching the stories, the journalists discussed a variety of key areas: finding an angle, protecting anonymity, avoiding the shock value, taking care with the interview and remaining objective. The last piece yielded controversial opinions among the three as well as was in contrast to what the survivors expressed as desirable in a journalist covering a sexual assault story. The journalists agreed that they should avoid sensationalizing a story and approach interviews in a caring way, practices that align with the survivor's requests. However, in their approach to objectivity that was different among the three fosters the need for a discussion in order to align values.

When discussing finding an angle, two of the three said they work to find something different, but try to not do so in a way that is obvious (N, B). "How do we talk about this sensitively, but also aggressively because sexual assault is an issue that people often dance around and we didn't really want to do that," said N, when describing how they approach stories. A said that as journalists approach the angle for their stories, it's important to "be transparent about your process and purpose."

The three journalists each understood why a survivor would want to remain anonymous and each made a statement regarding that they would be willing to take on an anonymous source. N discussed that the writer and the editor would always know the name of the individual, but around the office and in all forms of communication the pseudonym would be used. "As journalists, we think of ourselves as microphones to the public where we think the public should know what we know. But this isn't one of those moments. We should know the identity, but the story is what is more important," said N. "While we don't love anonymous sources, we will

always take that, especially in articles like this,” said B. After her statement, N said that names are never included in the CQs, the way the DTH notates that facts have been checked when the article is in the process of being written. The name of the survivor would not need to be fact checked because of their willingness to grant anonymity.

When asked what journalists should keep in mind about writing a story about sexual assault, all three discussed avoiding the shock value. “I try to put more emphasis on what does this mean for the larger population,” said N, “You never want to be aiming for the shock value.” A explained that there is a bigger purpose for writing these stories beyond shock. “People’s stories make other people feel empathetic, and when other people feel empathetic, that’s when change can happen,” said A. She further discussed that even if she has a quote on the record, she will avoid using it if it is contentious and could cause emotional distress after publication.

When discussing how they approach interviews, the journalists acknowledged that research was important and that preparing questions was the first step. B said that preparing questions for when you talk with administrators is important because you have something you can directly show them, but with survivors she had her questions written down so that she wasn’t fumbling with them and coming off unprepared. N said one of the important parts of approaching an interview with a survivor is to avoid the authoritative compulsion to prove you are right, which is common in a student journalist. “Come across as an amendable peer, someone who is there to help by writing a story about it,” said N. Finding survivors to interview can be difficult (A, B, N), but as student journalists they can go to events held by students and likely find someone willing to talk. “For one piece, I had to specifically reach out to survivors, which was a little uncomfortable,” said B. She had attended an event held on campus where she knew survivors would be so that she could ask for some sources. A also attended an event to talk with

survivors, but she said she held all her interviews before the event because the event was “a space to grieve over what has happened to women.” She added, “I didn’t feel comfortable stepping into that space as a reporter.” All three discussed opening the conversation with an introduction to what their piece was about, and starting the interview with broad questions. B said, “I always make sure to tell a source that it’s never an obligatory thing.” N said, “Take the first 20 minutes of the conversation with this person and just listen to what they have to say. There’s a time and a place to be skeptical, but listen first and try to find the nuance in the story.” Neither of the other two writers discussed being skeptical of the information they were given. After being asked what a journalist should do during an interview, only one participant brought up the possibility of sending quotes to a survivor after the interview. A said, “I personally don’t have a problem with sending people their quotes, I find that it always makes sources more comfortable.” She also mentioned that the DTH recently adopted the practice of not sending quotes to interviewees, but that it is still best in this situation.

The final piece of approaching a story about sexual assault that journalists brought up was the idea of objectivity. Two different opinions were shared among the three journalists with N prioritizing objectivity over emotions, and A and B suggesting that media can be an advocate for change. N said that it’s important for a journalist to “remain disinterested” during an interview. She said, “It’s easy to sit across from a survivor and feel very sad. Feel emotionally invested after a story comes out. It’s better for the greater purpose of the story to approach it as facts and not emotions” (N). Both A and B said that there was controversy when student, Delaney Robinson made her case against football player, Allen Artis public in the fall of 2016. “When the Allen Artis case happened, a lot of women wanted to have a meeting about how to cover these things objectively when they are really pissed off,” said A. This quote not only

brings to light the difference in name association with the case - the survivors call it Delaney's, while two of the journalists said Artis', - but it also shows that the individuals writing about the case were aware of their emotional attachment to the case already.

Two of the journalists suggested that writing about sexual assault was something that could require taking a stance. B said, "I don't think this is something that is bias, I think it's well agreed upon that it's something you shouldn't do," in reference to sexual assault cases. B then said, "Newspapers and media can be a force that changes the conversation of sexual assault," which is starkly different from N. statement, "Media is not an advocate." Further, N said "In the front of every journalist's mind should be sensitivity towards the people you are speaking with and, a less common opinion, sensitivity towards the accused as well." This is contradicted by A's statement, "Obviously, those facing allegations, you have to give them a statement, but their opinions aren't important." All three discussed that the facts should be right, but the differences were evidenced in how those facts would be used. A said, "The DTH, being unaffiliated from the university, we can call the university the rape school, because if that's what it is, people need to know." B discussed that their independence allows them to hold parties, especially the university accountable. "Accountability doesn't necessarily mean calling out negatively, but rather saying 'hey, we are doing this story, we are watching, we are keeping a tab on this' to make sure that they keep doing what they say they are going to do," said B. While the objectivity piece seemed to be conflicting amongst the three, it also conflicts with the survivors who suggested they need someone to be emotionally invested for the story to be truthful as well as need an ally for change.

Campus journalists' concerns when covering sexual assault:

I asked each journalist what concerns future journalists should be aware of when covering sexual assault. I also asked if they had an advice on how to deal with these concerns.

There were three main categories that each journalist touched on as topics that create stress or worry for an inexperienced writer: writing for a small campus, vicarious trauma and how to navigate situations when you are unsure of how to approach interviewing and writing the story. The idea of vicarious trauma hints at the different approaches survivors and journalists take when evaluating media coverage. On one end, the survivors want the journalists to be more invested. On the other, the journalists discussed how they actively plan on coping with the side effects of trauma and how often that happens by emotionally distancing oneself. By discussing vicarious trauma as well as their other concerns, the journalists highlighted issues that a training or a best practices guide could address.

When speaking to the concern of writing for a small campus, N said, “You never know who on this campus is going to be even slightly acquainted with who,” as she discussed the importance of maintaining anonymity. “On a campus level you are much more likely to find a hugely impact source who wants to stay anonymous and that’s good because you’ll find a lot more inherent truth in that story if you allow anonymity. But it’s also a lot more risky, because even on a campus of 28,000 students, there are a lot of identifying factors in a person,” said N. She also mentioned that errors in campus journalism can result in additional consequences than those writing about a larger community. B also said, “When you’re writing about it in the community that it’s happening, it can hit home a little bit more because you know that it’s happening maybe 100 feet away from you. I think that puts a little more seriousness in it at this level.” While survivors addressed that campus coverage should be more emotional and detailed, the journalists suggested worries of errors and what the consequences would be in such a close knit community.

The second point that survivors didn't mention at all when it came to potential concerns of media coverage is the idea of vicarious trauma. A stated that the vicarious trauma of even hearing a survivor's story has led her to avoiding covering the topic. She said, that an important thing journalists should always be aware of is, "knowing what triggers you." N shared a similar thought by saying, "Writing about such a weighty topic, it becomes draining." She also shared, "It's easy to shove down human feelings, and that's not helpful to anyone" (N). Each journalist mentioned that self-care should be a priority when covering this subject and that they had learned through personal experience that some best care practices work better than others.

The third and final concern that the journalists expressed, was not knowing the proper terminology or how to read an uncomfortable situation. Two of the three journalists discussed this in depth. B said, "Going into the stories, I was a little nervous talking to people, wanting to make sure that I wasn't offending anyone or saying anything insensitive." A openly said that she didn't know the correct term, "rapist or attacker," and B said that she didn't know whether an individual should be called a "survivor" or "victim." However, the concern didn't end with the word choice. "Even with questions, I don't ask about their direct experience, but how do I be aware when I'm tangentially asking about their experience? Where is the line crossed," said B. She was also worried about triggering someone in the situation and not being able to step back properly. Both A and B suggested that there should be a training on how to cover these concerns.

Summary. The interviews conducted with the journalists provided insight into how they understand their role within media as well as what their concerns were; however, these points become significant when compared to the responses survivors gave. The competing viewpoints of objectivity as well as assumed understanding of terms and survivor perspective serve as valuable discussion points for future coverage of the topic. By culminating this discussion into a

best practices guide, this thesis hopes to alleviate the concerns of journalists, while illuminating the suggestions and perspectives of survivors.

Survivors understand campus media coverage of sexual assault to be complex, but inaccurate, something they believe could be addressed through strategies like emotionally connecting to the subjects as well as adopting comforting interview practices. They understand that campus media have a unique opportunity in the news coverage of sexual assault, but currently, the DTH does not take advantage of writing student perspectives of a topic that affects even themselves. As students on the campus they are writing about, the survivors expect the journalists to connect with stories about sexual assault and write them in a way that is personal and progressive. The survivors view their role as subjects within news stories as well as critics for when stories go wrong. Suggestions including word definitions and explanations of the effects of trauma detailed the importance allocated to survivor engagement with the media. The journalists interviewed expressed that there were key topics to be aware of when approaching sexual assault, but they hadn't had specific training that addressed those topics. Their concerns expanded beyond and in contrast to what survivors had mentioned from the importance of self-care to remaining objective in news coverage. The concern of objectivity creates an important discussion that not only relates to the idea of campus journalists being a part of the story already, but also relates to survivor's suggestion that campus media can be different and simultaneously just as effective as national media.

CHAPTER 5 – Conclusion and Best Practices

After analyzing what both the survivors and journalists thought about their role within campus media coverage of sexual assault, it becomes evident there are many intricacies that go into covering the topic, especially if one intends to take a survivor centered approach. Currently, survivors believe that campus media coverage of sexual assault is inadequate, yet they think campus media are in a position to be a powerful force of change. As evidenced by the lawsuits that request records associated with sexual assault, the Daily Tar Heel (DTH) and campus papers across the nation appear to be placing themselves in a space attempting to make a change by holding their respective universities accountable. However, the disconnect between survivors and campus media doesn't arise in the intentions, but rather the execution. Both the survivors and the journalists discuss similar goals and tactics that media should have, but the finished news stories don't seem to be adequately addressing and discussing what survivors want. If both parties wish to change the media coverage of sexual assault, and if papers like the DTH wish to gain access to sensitive data about sexual assault cases, it is vital for survivors and campus media to come to an understanding and learn from one another.

Survivors expect sustained, emotional and non-judgmental media coverage of the topic. Coverage where they are able to speak freely without fear of retaliation and have permission to review. They expect to be treated respectfully in an interview process. They also expect to be fully educated on what the purpose and nature of the coverage is. Survivors want to be portrayed in a light that they deem accurate, through use of their own words and through review of the text written about them. They expect the journalist to acknowledge that what is ok for one survivor may not be ok for the next, and to take the broader context of sexual assault into consideration

when writing each and every piece. Most importantly, survivors want campus media to take a stance against sexual violence at UNC-Chapel Hill and to do so with them in mind.

Two of the three journalists discussed how media are a platform for activism and that they as journalists were in a position to call attention to needed changes. The third believed that media in no way should be an advocate, rather media should be a place for advocates to share their messages. The latter's concern was objectivity, something the other two mentioned, but were less focused upon. The survivors expressed related concerns acknowledging that the media have a goal to be objective; however, that pursuit of objectivity often silences their voices, while promoting that of the perpetrator. The DTH has broadly announced that it has filed the lawsuit to hold the university accountable to its policies. This is a position that many of the survivors expressed as a form of advocacy, even if they aren't directly stating it. However, the survivors said that if the campus paper is going to pursue these records for this reason, the writing must support the cause, not silence it.

The survivors interviewed for this research expect the DTH to fill a unique place in media coverage of sexual assault, one that is deeply connected to the dialogue of sexual assault. In the minds of some of the survivors, the campus paper is already connected to the issue, just by having journalists that are students. Therefore, it should take a stand against something that is so prominent on campus. The journalists, however, are concerned about objectivity as well as about writing a story without offending parties involved. In order for campus papers to be able to take a stand against the issue, which the lawsuits indicate is a desire, and write from a survivor centered approach, which is what the survivors on campus expect, a change in the understanding of objectivity must be adopted. That change as well as a culmination of best practices taken from national organizations and the recommendations from survivors in this research will allow

campus journalists to remain professional in their coverage, but elevate their writing to one that doesn't silence the voices of the already marginalized community of survivors.

A change in the understanding of objectivity will allow campus journalists to be open to covering sexual assault stories in a way that not only promotes progressive discussion, but also gives voice to those who are often left voiceless. In the pursuit of objectivity, journalists give quotes to opposing parties to indicate that they themselves are not taking a side. They actively remove themselves from the story to report just the facts, something journalist participant, N mentioned in her conversation. However, research shows that objectivity is more complex than showing both sides, and that a journalist's role requires much more thought than careful placing of quotes.

Strong objectivity:

In the past decades, scholars have debated objectivity and its purpose. Durham and Cohen-Almagor are two of such scholars who studied and made conclusions about the use of objectivity in media. Other scholars like Praveen Kumar argue that the pursuit of objectivity does not favor those affected by the media, but rather corporate structures (Praveen Kumar, 2016). In relation to the discussion of campus media, Durham and Cohen-Almagor's arguments prove relevant to understanding the requests of survivors.

The term objectivity originated as determining fact from opinion; however, it quickly became a practice where journalists compiled sources in order to avoid criticism of being subjective (Durham, 1998). During this transition, objectivity began to be comparable to pluralism, the elimination your personal viewpoint on an issue and replacing it with many opposing viewpoints (Durham, 1998). It then was compared to relativism, where journalists pin those opposing viewpoints together and present them as equally valid. This definition of

objectivity remains visible and relevant today as campus media coverage of sexual assault gives a quote to the accused and the survivor's attorneys without contributing input or any learned knowledge (Salinas, 2016). Durham argues that this execution inaccurately assumes one can remove themselves from something that they as journalists are already a part of and that it effectively prevents societal progress on an issue (Durham, 1998). She explains that facts are theory laden, meaning that how you interpret or discuss a fact has been shaped by the theories and viewpoints you hold (Durham, 1998). With this understanding, even a discussion of facts can be subjective, because as a person living in the world you are writing about, you have bias that cannot be removed.

Durham explains that public journalists, also known as community journalists, see themselves as participants in the community rather than observers (Durham, 1998). With this definition, the writers at the DTH would be classified as public journalists, for they are students writing about the university in which they attend. Public journalists focus on improving the life of the community they are a part of and they represent a middle ground between observer and advocate (Durham, 1998). By openly stating that they are a part of the community, their opinion allows the information to be translated as activism in a way that the audience trusts and sees as truthful. Durham acknowledges that critics state that becoming an advocate could lead to corruption. However, she states, "This argument is based on the assumption that a journalist has no community affiliations if they are not explicitly declared" (Durham 1998, pg. 122). Her argument carries weight as journalists, especially one that writes for a campus paper, are certainly always a part of a community whether they state so or not.

The current practice of objectivity prevents progress because it places two or more viewpoints against each other and presents them as equally valid, something that research and

scientific studies could prove is not in fact true (Durham, 1998). Durham gives the example of climate change and how if you were to give equal space to a scientist who has proof for climate change against a politician who does not believe it's true, the public is being done a disservice due to a lack of agency from the reporter in determining the truth (Durham, 1998). Not only does it prevent the truth, the traditional understanding of objectivity eliminates the voices of under-represented communities by refusing to acknowledge the power structures that allow a journalist to write the way they do (Durham, 1998). The journalist is already a part of a dominant social order and if he/she does not acknowledge that position of power in the story, the truth in a story could be overlooked. We see this dominant social order in campus media coverage of sexual assault when a journalist refuses to acknowledge that their position allows them the opportunity to talk with administrators who would deny a visit from an average student, etc. The survivors also mentioned that the power hierarchy exists between journalists and survivors, and unless the journalist acknowledges that power and attempts to write a story from the perspective of the survivor, the truth has been cut short (C, D).

Durham offers a solution, one called 'strong objectivity.' She challenges journalists to begin investigations with those most affected by not only the event, but also by the media coverage of the event. She writes, "Thus a journalist must strive to conceptualize him- or herself as the outsider, to become engaged in the consequences of the story from the point of view of those most disenfranchised by it, rather than in the simple aggregation of its parts" (Durham 1998, pg. 133). In this type of media coverage, objectivity would come from the acknowledgement that the reporter is a part of the story. Further the story should incorporate a discussion about social power structures like race, sex, class and gender identity can shape the facts of a story (Durham, 1998). This requires the journalist to have some agency in determining

the truth from the viewpoint of those most affected, a task that ultimately would require a distancing from conventional bias and refusing to legitimize false knowledge as well as engaging in the perspective of those the story affects (Durham, 1998). If a journalist is able to do this, they can progressively educate the public about a topic, without simply sharing their opinions.

Durham is not the only researcher to determine that the traditional sense of objectivity is inadequate. Cohen-Almagor argues that when covering stories that deal with terror, racism, sexism, etc., “the media in liberal democracies are not required to be objective in their coverage, but quite the opposite: they should denounce and condemn such phenomena” (Cohen-Almagor 2008, pg. 137). This research equates objectivity with moral neutrality, explaining that values are needed to make sense of facts and without the journalist’s values present, the story isn’t fully truthful. Cohen-Almagor argues that it is the duty of the media to uphold their values while condemning actions that are immoral, such as rape and terrorism. The piece presents three main reasons against moral neutrality in media coverage. The first is democracy and the simple fact that journalists have the right to free speech and should be allowed to share their beliefs. The second argument is that media consumers are not fully rational, nor educated, and therefore as Durham suggests, the media must embody an agency to present the public with valuable information. Finally, this research argues that in order to be socially responsible, journalists must abstain from moral neutrality (Cohen-Almagor 2008).

Cohen-Almagor explains that journalists have an obligation to follow their values in their writing the same way they use their values to make sense of the facts in front of them. Durham writes that journalists should acknowledge their presence in the stories they are writing as well as the position of the sources and power structures that make the story this experience that it is. Further the survivors interviewed suggested that journalists must become emotionally invested in

the story as well as acknowledge the pain survivors feel in order for the story to be truly accurate. These three viewpoints promote a different understanding of objectivity, one that requires a journalist to empathize with the perspective of marginalized communities and use their power to display the truth to the outside world. Especially with campus media, journalists cannot remove themselves from the community they are writing about because they are in fact students themselves. Therefore, their current pursuits of objectivity are not actualizing that goal and would serve the community better if they were to follow the suggestions of Durham and the survivors.

Should journalists take a new approach to objectivity in their stories and allow themselves to take a stance on an issue as deplorable as sexual assault, in order to capture the truth, they will have to approach their story from the standpoint of the marginalized community, survivors. To take on this perspective would require journalists to be emotionally immersed in the survivor experience. However, as this research discovered, there is no one survivor experience and until you live through an assault, you cannot truly know what a survivor feels. Further, the survivors stated that there are expectations and requests that journalists should follow should they delve into that experience. In order to pursue a new form of objectivity as well as comply with requests of the survivors, journalists need a guide.

Media advocates across the nation have created best practices guides for journalists to consider when covering the topic; however, this research hopes to contribute to those suggestions by incorporating the recommendations of survivors for campus specific media coverage. The national guides are written from an advocate perspective rather than that of a survivor and they aren't tailored to campus media. There is significance in allowing the survivor to be the one making the recommendations, something this research discovered as every survivor said that a

journalist should default to what makes the survivor comfortable. By taking information directly from survivors, best practices that are truly survivor centered can be created. The existing guides provide important definitions and interview strategies, but they leave out the discussion of purpose and journalist connection to the story. As evidenced by this research, the goals of the coverage as well as the journalist's emotional tie to the story are incredibly important to survivors. While the national guides provide sufficient recommendations when it comes to questions to avoid or words to use, they miss a few relevant topics that survivors expect to be addressed when participating in a campus media story on sexual assault.

Best practices for covering sexual assault:

The following discussion is a narrative of what best practices journalists should be aware of when covering sexual assault. The appendix of this research has a condensed more legible version of the guide that will be available for use by journalists.

Fair coverage of sexual assault must begin with a journalist who understands the currently accepted rape myths, what it's like to be a survivor, the statistics and what is missing from the numbers. Rape myths are beliefs that limit one's understanding of what constitutes rape (Argiero, Dyrdaahl, Fernandez, Whitney, Woodring, 2011). Some of the most prominent are: a woman asked for it, she could have tried harder to fight her attacker, she wasn't innocent before the attack and can't be trusted to make this claim, she is using rape to conceal regret, the alleged assailant is a good guy (Burt, 1980). Once a journalist is aware of the myths and their negative impact, he/she can actively avoid letting them influence the story a survivor is sharing. Further, a journalist should be aware of what being a survivor is like in order to fully comprehend a need for accurate media coverage that won't leave harm in its wake. As a survivor, you blame yourself (T), you may sound 'wishy washy' when you speak because it's hard to talk about (Q), you have

to hold your life together while recovering from trauma (X), you lose trust in everyone (C), and you may have different reactions to speaking about your assault over time (T). It's important to know the human side of what being a survivor looks like in order to accompany the statistics. More importantly than the statistics is what is missing from them (Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, 2013). The reporting rate is near 20% meaning that the vast majority of sexual assault experiences are undocumented (RAINN). Individuals of minority races and gender identities are less likely to report and therefore there are less of their voices in these statistics (Human Rights Campaign). As one begins to notice and question the flaws in the numbers, it becomes incredibly important for a journalist to recognize the human side to sexual assault.

As a journalist begins the process of writing a story about sexual assault, the use of language must be considered. Word choice when it comes to interviewing a survivor and writing a story can influence the way the public understands the truth as well as impact the survivor's perception of their social acceptance. For this reason, the journalist should understand the words as a survivor does. "The term sexual assault undergoes this transformation once you've experienced it and it means something so incredibly much. All of these words take on different meanings," said survivor D. In order to understand the meaning from a survivor perspective, journalists should know that using the terms survivor, victim and rapist is a conscious decision and usually carries an emotional response. For this reason, it is important to use the language that survivors use (S; Walsh, n.d.). Some words to avoid include: alleged, accuser, sex, affair, fondled, kissing and receiving because of their consensual connotation (Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, 2013; Garcia-Rojas, 2012). Other terms like "was raped" and "unharmd" are contentious because they both remove the responsibility of the rapist and eliminate mental trauma respectively (Garcia-Rojas, 2012). Words that are acceptable for use

include rape, assault, abuse, forcibly touched and unfounded (Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, 2013; Garcia-Rojas, 2012); however it is important to know that not everyone will identify with the words rape, abuse and assault (D, T). When the time comes to identify an individual as a survivor or victim, the journalist should resort to what the individual selects (C, D, Q, S, T, X). Finally, a journalist should avoid language that makes sexual assault appear normal (Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, 2013; Global Protection Cluster, 2013).

While a journalist conducts an interview with a survivor of sexual assault, there are some best practices that he/she should keep in mind. A journalist should be transparent in both their goal behind coverage, the process in which they will record or document the interview as well as the potential legal ramifications of the coverage (A, T). Being relatable and truly listening to a survivor is important for the story (A), but a journalist must monitor their emotions as well because by becoming upset, they can trigger a survivor (Garcia-Rojas, 2012). Survivors also have expectations for how and why questions should be asked during an interview. Journalists should know what they are going to say ahead of time (Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, 2013; B). Questions should start broad (A) and be a time for journalists to sit back and simply listen to what the survivor wants to share (N). Journalists should not ask probing questions or ask about direct experiences (Garcia-Rojas, 2012; B). Survivors believe that the story should come first over the journalist's agenda (T). As the interview continues, it's important to offer anonymity to the survivor because it allows them to feel more comfortable (D, N). When a survivor is comfortable, a journalist is more likely to be able to use that source again (B). Alongside anonymity, a journalist should offer up the option for survivors to review their quotes or the whole story (A, Q; Garcia-Rojas, 2012; Walsh, n.d.). "Knowing that I would be

allowed to review it would compel me to give everything I can muster to make sure the story is truthful, complete and as journalistically valuable as it could be,” said D.

For every suggestion of what journalists should do during an interview, there are expectations of things they should not do. Journalists should avoid acting as a therapist and giving the survivor suggestions on what they could have done differently (C, T). They should never suggest that media coverage will help their case (Global Protection Cluster, 2013). They should avoid taking contact information from the survivor, rather they should give out theirs should the survivor have questions or concerns (Global Protection Cluster, 2013). Finally, even if the survivor appears to be saying something contradictory, a journalist should never correct a survivor (Q; Garcia-Rojas, 2012).

As a journalist approaches the physical writing of a story about sexual assault there are a variety of things he/she must keep in mind in order to write a story that meets both the expectations of the survivor and the surrounding community. The notion of strong objectivity is the first thing to consider. Journalists are concerned with remaining objective; however, on a campus level this is impossible because the journalists are writing about a community they are a part of (Durham, 1998). Campus journalists distance themselves emotionally (N) to avoid seeming bias, but according to survivors, by refusing to allow yourself to feel the pain survivors feel, you are inherently being bias against them (C, D). When a journalist avoids emotional connection to the story and replaces it with quotes from opposing parties, the public misses the actual truth and survivors are deterred from coming forward in the future (S, D). In order to write with strong objectivity a journalist should acknowledge his/her presence in the story and use agency to determine what facts are accurate and productive for society to know (Durham, 1998).

After journalists have considered objectivity, they must address why they are writing the story in the first place. There are a few goals of media coverage of sexual assault that survivors consider important. The first is educating the public on what sexual assault is rather than promoting experiences that are sensational, but less common (Q, C, X). “I need to see more about what it really is, not the bruises and cuts and rape kits. I need a more holistic view of how many people choose not to report and why they choose not to report,” said survivor C. The second goal is writing about the trauma and aftermath of the assault. The survivors expressed that this is often the hardest part for them and that the general public rarely understands the impact it can have (D, X). The third goal is educating about resources whether as the focal point of the story or by listing them at the end of each piece on sexual assault. Many feel that they don’t know what resources are available to them and often need a place to start (S, Q).

As they write the story the journalist should make sure they find educated and relevant sources, select photos that do not detract from the purpose and do not disclose an identity without permission (X, T), and should reference resources that could help others in the future.

Throughout the entire process, journalists must be aware of their roles and responsibilities when writing about sexual assault. They should prioritize dignity and safety of the individual being featured above that of raising awareness or money (Global Protection Cluster, 2013). They are writing to be a voice for those who are voiceless (A, B), and therefore must take the power hierarchy as well as intersectionality into consideration when they conduct interviews and publish pieces (Durham, 1998; Garcia-Rojas, 2012). Journalists are the protectors of source identity while also the forces that can hold institutions accountable, and therefore they should take care in all of their communication within the news story and amongst the news room (A, N). Finally, a journalist should know that even if they are an experienced writer or are a

survivor themselves, they are not the survivor who they are writing about. It is their responsibility to portray the story as accurately as they can without making assumptions or passing judgments (Garcia-Rojas, 2012). It is the role of the journalist to communicate important information that the general public may not have access too. Therefore, it is their responsibility to be fully educated on policies, laws, statistics and social trends that can influence sexual assault cases and their perception in society (B, N).

Finally, as a campus journalist approaches coverage of sexual assault, he/she should take time for self care. They should recognize that self-care is important because vicarious trauma can affect your ability to write (A). Talking with an editor as well as determining what triggers you and how to handle it is imperative for a journalist covering a topic this distressing (A, B, N).

If campus journalists follow these best practices, they will be to approach media coverage of sexual assault from a survivor perspective while still serving as a unique asset to society. As campus journalists engage in conversation about the topic and file law suits to gain access to new information, it will be important for them to recognize the power they have and be sure to use it in a productive and ethical way.

Limitations and Future Research:

This research ultimately hoped to continue the dialogue of a need for survivor centered media coverage of sexual assault. However, it does have limitations and therefore possibilities for future studies. The participants in this research were limited not only in quantity, but also in diversity. While the survivors represented a diverse range of sexual assault experience, all but two of the participants were white and all identified as female. Further, while not directly asked, when talking about sexual assault, the participants who identified as survivors spoke of an assault by a man on a woman. While this doesn't imply their preferred sexual identity, it suggests

that an experience centered around a non-heterosexual pairing of people was not at the forefront of their mind. While this sample population was opt-in and therefore all that was possible, future research should expand the participant pool to including individuals of other racial and gender identities. This is significant because national statistics show that 21% of transgender, genderqueer, nonconforming college students are sexually assaulted, compared to 18 and 4% of non-transgender females and males respectively (RAINN). Twenty-six percent of gay men and 44 percent of lesbian women experience rape or sexual assault, while 61 and 37 percent of bisexual women and men will experience rape (Human Rights Campaign). Further, those who identify as LGBTQ are less likely to be believed by police and hospital workers as well as more likely to be denied services (Human Rights Campaign). American Indian women are twice as likely to experience sexual assault than any other race, with white women are the second most likely (RAINN). However, all of these statistics are based on an average 20% of the victims who report with racial minorities and those who identify as LGBTQ reporting at much lower rates (RAINN). These statistics suggest that the scope of sexual assault, especially on a college campus extends far beyond the white female identifying experience that this research analyzes. Future research should expand to other identities in order to capture often times the more vulnerable populations who are often left out of media coverage of sexual assault.

Future research could also expand into the education of journalists before they begin to write stories for their respective publications. Often, students are required to take a course that introduces them to news writing, but what those courses look like could vary and leave journalists at different levels of comfort when it comes to covering sensitive topics. Future research might find that some of the findings presented here such as the idea of strong objectivity and best practices when it comes to quote sharing are a part of a system and therefore without

education early on, the journalist may not understand the proposed practices. Looking into how courses for journalists are taught could reveal more possibilities for best practices when covering a sensitive issue like sexual assault. Perhaps findings would reveal how to create content for coursework and ideas for professors to implement.

Finally, future research could also look into building a guide for survivors who are approaching media. Similar to the research presented here, it could interview both survivors and journalists to understand what the process is like and provide tips and practices for a survivor who wants to come forward with their story. As this research suggested, there are many intricacies in media coverage of this issue. Survivors would do well to also have a guide that can help them prepare for an interview as well as help educate them on what the media process for this type of story normally looks like.

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APPENDIX:

A. IRB Approved Study Consent Form

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Adult Participants

Consent Form Version Date: 01/04/2017

IRB Study # 16-3287

Title of Study: Sexual Assault in Campus Media: a guide that drives survivor centered media coverage

Principal Investigator: Hannah Petersen

Principal Investigator Department: School of Media and Journalism

Principal Investigator Phone number: 336-391-1426

Principal Investigator Email Address: hannahmp@live.unc.edu

Faculty Advisor: Anne Johnston

Faculty Advisor Contact Information: (919) 962-4286

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary.

You may choose not to participate, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study.

You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to research both campus journalist's and sexual assault survivor's understanding of campus media coverage of sexual assault. Across the nation, many university papers are requesting records related to sexual assault cases as they try to cover the issue properly. Campus media is understudied, yet rising in influence as their readership remains steady in a time of national newspaper decline. The public records requests and the growing media creates a need for a best practices guide to help campus journalists cover the issue of

sexual assault on their own campus. Many national news sources use best practices guides to cover topics they do not understand through a first hand experience; however the guides that currently exist for sexual assault coverage are not tailored to campus media specifically and are written through the voice of advocates rather than survivors. This study aims to research how campus journalists understand their coverage of sexual assault and how survivors understand their role within it. These aims will be determined through in-depth interviews centered around media coverage of sexual assault with survivors of sexual assault and campus journalists. Based on the data from this research, a best practices guide will be created in order to guide coverage in the future.

Are there any reasons you should not be in this study?

You should not be in this study if you are currently not or have never been a campus journalist for the Daily Tar Heel **or** if you are not a survivor or victim of any form of sexual assault.

How many people will take part in this study?

There will be approximately 25 people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?

This interview will last between 15 minutes and an hour. You will not experience any follow-up after this interview unless you should initiate conversation between us.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

This study consists of in-depth in person interviews. If you take part in this study, you will participate in an interview that will range in length anywhere between 15 minutes and an hour. Participation in the study is completely optional. You may choose not to answer any of the questions. You may also request to stop the audio recording and end the interview at any point in time. After the interview, I will not reach out to you about the information collected or the interview itself.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You will not benefit personally from being in this research study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

The topic of sexual assault is a sensitive one. Therefore, you may experience emotional discomfort during the interview due to a first hand or second hand experience. However, the interview is centered around media coverage of sexual assault, not the assault itself in order to minimize this risk. I, the researcher, will not ask probing or follow-up questions should the topic of sexual assault in relation to your own experience be discussed. There are no other immediate or long-term risks that the researcher is aware of.

There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to the

researcher.

What if we learn about new findings or information during the study?

You will be given any new information gained during the course of the study that might affect your willingness to continue your participation.

How will information about you be protected?

You will be assigned a random number. That number will correspond to the data collected from this interview as well as the recording of the interview should you consent to a recording. The document attached to this consent form is a confidentiality document and is the only document that will link your signature to your assigned number. That document will be scanned and saved through the UNC network onto a password protected flash drive and the physical copy will be deleted. Your name will not be attached to any data whatsoever. Records will be saved securely through the UNC network and no one other than myself, the researcher, will have access to the data.

Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies (for example, the FDA) for purposes such as quality control or safety.

The audio recording of this interview will be saved through the UNC secure network and immediately deleted off of the recording device. I, the researcher, will take partial transcriptions for quotes and notes from the interview, which will be saved along with the other material. The audio recordings will only be kept through the time of the study, after which they will be deleted.

At any point during the interview you may request to end, not answer a question or turn off the audio recording.

Check the line that best matches your choice:

_____ OK to record me during the study

_____ Not OK to record me during the study

Under North Carolina law, confidentiality does not extend to information about abuse or neglect of a child or disabled adult. If the researchers become aware of such information, they are required to report it to state authorities.

What will happen if you are injured by this research?

All research involves a chance that something bad might happen to you. This may include the risk of personal injury. In spite of all safety measures, you might develop a reaction or injury

from being in this study. If such problems occur, the researchers will help you get medical care, but any costs for the medical care will be billed to you and/or your insurance company. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has not set aside funds to pay you for any such reactions or injuries, or for the related medical care. You do not give up any of your legal rights by signing this form.

What if you want to stop before your part in the study is complete?

You can withdraw from this study at any time, without penalty. You may also choose to not answer any question as well as stop the audio recording. The investigator also has the right to stop your participation at any time. This could be because you have had an unexpected reaction, or have failed to follow instructions, or because the entire study has been stopped.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?

You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?

It will not cost you anything to be in this study.

What if you have questions about this study?

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions about the study (including payments), complaints, concerns, or if a research-related injury occurs, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu

Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Printed Name of Research Participant

Signature of Research Team Member Obtaining Consent

Date

Printed Name of Research Team Member Obtaining Consent

B. Confidentiality Form

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

This interview is an element of research for an Undergraduate Honor's Thesis conducted by Hannah M. Petersen, an undergraduate in the School of Media and Journalism. This thesis will culminate in a best practices guide for campus media covering sexual assault. The audio and transcript from this interview will be used as data to create this guide, meaning both trends and quotes could be used in the thesis write-up and the guide itself. The guide and the thesis will be publicly available through the UNC Library system, but may also become available on a larger scale should the guide prove useful to media outlets. Your consent to participate in this research is entirely voluntary and will be obtained through the separate IRB consent form. The purpose of this form is to explain confidentiality.

In this research, you will remain confidential and your name is not attached to the information in any way. Instead, I will assign you a letter that you may then approve. That letter will be attached to data, the recording, quotes or the transcript during the time that I, the researcher, am analyzing it. In both the thesis and the guide, your letter will be attached to quotes or data should they be used, but the researcher does not anticipate there will be no way for a reader to connect the information back to you. In order to ensure this, no identifying information, personal anecdotes or descriptions will be included in the writing of both pieces. Should quotes contain any of such information, it will not be used in either the thesis or the guide. Upon publication of the thesis, the information connecting your letter to your signature will be destroyed.

Your assigned letter is _____.

Should you continue to consent to this form of confidentiality, please read the below statement and sign accordingly.

We, the undersigned, have read the above. The interviewer affirms that she/he has explained the nature and purpose of this research and the form of confidentiality. The interviewee affirms that she/he has consented to the definition and use of confidentiality in the interview.

Signature of Interviewee

Date

Signature of Interviewer

Date

C. Survivor Initial Contact E-mail

Hello! Thank you so much for reaching out to me.

I want to take this time to tell you a little bit about me and my research. My name is Hannah Petersen, and I am a senior in the School of Media and Journalism currently writing an undergraduate honors thesis. My thesis work, is centered around in-depth interviews that will touch on sensitive questions and for that purpose, I encourage you to look over the attached consent form.

Should you continue to be willing to participate in the interview, I would like to share some information with you. You will remain entirely confidential during this research process. The interview is expected to last anywhere between 15 minutes and an hour and it will be recorded.

You may choose the location and time of the interview because I want to ensure that you are comfortable and feel safe. Should you not have a preference in interview location, the School of Media and Journalism has an interview room that we may use.

If you are still willing to participate in this interview, please let me know a time and place that is best for you.

Best,

Hannah M. Petersen

hannahmp@live.unc.edu

336-391-1426

Safe Zone and HAVEN Trained

D. Journalist Initial Contact E-mail

Hello!

I hope this message finds you well. My name is Hannah Petersen, and I am a senior in the School of Media and Journalism. I am currently working on an undergraduate honors thesis and your work with the Daily Tar Heel has led me to contacting you today.

Would you be willing to talk with me about your experience covering sensitive topics for the Daily Tar Heel? I value your opinions and experiences as a campus journalist and believe they could provide valuable insight to this research. The interview will include some sensitive questions, and for this reason, I encourage you to read the attached consent form.

Should you be willing to speak with me, there is a little information I would like you to know.

You will remain entirely confidential during this research process. The interview is expected to

last anywhere between 15 minutes and an hour and it will be recorded. You may choose the location and time of the interview because I want to ensure that you are comfortable and feel safe. Should you not have a preference in interview location, the School of Media and Journalism has an interview room that we may use.

If you are willing to participate in this interview, please let me know a time and place that is best for you. My contact information can be found below. Thank you in advance for your time!

Best,

Hannah M. Petersen

hannahmp@live.unc.edu

336-391-1426

Safe Zone and HAVEN trained

E. Recruitment Flyer for the Women's Center

Research Participants Needed for Qualitative Interviews

Raising awareness of campus sexual assault and the ways that it has and should be covered by campus media is of paramount importance.

I am currently working on an undergraduate honors thesis on the topic of campus media's coverage of sexual assault. In order to understand how survivors of sexual assault and campus journalists understand their role within campus media coverage of sexual assault, I am hosting in-depth interviews centered around both survivor and journalist perceptions and understanding of such media coverage.

If you are a **UNC- Chapel Hill student** who **identifies as a survivor of sexual assault**, I would love the opportunity to discuss your perceptions of media coverage of sexual assault.

Details about the interview:

- Expected to last between 15 mins and an hour
- Will be recorded upon your permission
- You may select a location and time that you are most comfortable with
- If you want an ally from the Women's Center, CAPS or the Orange County Rape Crisis Center to be present to talk to during or after the interview, I will do my best to arrange those resources for you

If you are interested in participating, please reach out to me using the contact information below.

Hannah M. Petersen
hannahmp@live.unc.edu
336-391-1426
Safe Zone and HAVEN trained

F. Survivor Interview Guide

1. What pronouns would you prefer me to use during the interview?
2. What term do you prefer? (victim, survivor, or any other term)
3. Do you read campus news, specifically the Daily Tar Heel?
 - a. Why, why not?
4. Are you familiar with the DTH's coverage of sexual assault?
 - a. What can you tell me about it?
5. What does sexual assault look like to you? You may reflect personally or generally based on your level of comfort.
 - a. In other words, how would you describe sexual assault, rape or other forms of sexual violence to someone who may be unfamiliar with it?
6. What measures do you think would effectively bring an end to sexual violence?
7. What is the media's role when it comes to sexual assault, rape or sexual violence? What should they do? What should they prioritize?
8. Do you think media depicts sexual assault in way that is true to your experience or to your definition of assault?
 - a. How so, how not so?
 - b. Can you think of any good or bad examples of media coverage of sexual assault? What makes you classify them as such.
9. Do you think campus media, specifically the DTH, depicts sexual assault in a way that is true to your experience or your definition of assault?
10. What is your impression of the DTH's coverage of sexual assault, rape or any other sexual violence?
11. Have you ever interacted with journalists about any topic?
 - a. What was your experience?
12. Have you interacted with journalists about your experience with sexual violence?
 - a. If yes, What was your experience with the journalist like? Was it comfortable?
 - i. What would you do differently should it happen again?
 - b. If no, how would you imagine an interaction with a journalist about your experience to be like?
13. What comes to mind when I say the word ideal as it is related to and experience with a journalist covering your assault?

14. What would an ideal story about your experience feature (focal point, sources, quotes, etc.)?
 15. What would a negative experience with a journalist be like? What would make the story about your experience something you would not like to have published?
 16. What would you want journalists to know about your experience in order to write a well written story on sexual assault?
 17. What would you want the general public to know about your experience? What details would you want a story to include?
 18. What suggestions would you offer journalists interviewing survivors of sexual assault?
 19. How, in your opinion, should journalists select sources for a story about sexual assault?
 20. Should stories about sexual assault involve pictures? If so, what should these look like?
 21. Do you think there is a difference between national and campus coverage of sexual assault?
 - a. If yes, what might those differences include and lead to?
 22. What would be most important for journalists to keep in mind when covering sexual assault?
-

G. Journalist Interview Guide

1. What pronouns would you prefer me to use during the interview?
2. What is your position at the DTH? How long have you worked for the DTH?
3. In your opinion, what is sexual assault? How do you define it? How would you describe it to someone who is unfamiliar with the issue?
4. What has been your experience covering sexual assault or related news at the DTH?
5. What is your opinion on the DTH's coverage of sexual assault?
 - a. Are there things they do well? What are they?
 - b. Are there things they do poorly? What are they?
6. Have you read or heard any sexual assault stories in national media? What do you think of that coverage?
7. How do you think national coverage of sexual assault does in covering the topic?
8. How is it determined who covers sexual assault at the DTH? What reporter covers it?
9. What did your training about covering sexual assault look like? Was it required or optional?
 - a. If you had training, what was the impact of that training? (Outcomes, changed perspectives, etc.)
10. Did/do you feel properly trained to cover a story about sexual assault?
11. How do you personally prepare for covering a story about sexual assault?
12. How do you prepare for interviewing a sexual assault survivor?
13. How do you conduct interviews for stories about sexual assault?
14. What sources did you look for when planning the article?

15. What do you think is important to mention in a story about sexual assault? What do you think is important to leave out of a story about sexual assault?
16. What did you feel like during the interviews you conducted?
17. What do you see as being the relationship between you and the survivor you are interviewing or writing about? Does this relationship have an effect on the story?
18. What is the hardest part about covering stories about sexual assault?
19. What role, if any, should media play in covering an issue like sexual assault?