ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE ISSUE WITH ISSUES MANAGEMENT: AN ENGAGEMENT APPROACH TO INTEGRATE GENDER AND EMOTION INTO ISSUES MANAGEMENT

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Using sexual assault on college campuses as a context for interrogating issues management, this study offers a normative model for inclusive issues management through an engagement approach that can better account for the gendered and emotional dimensions of issues. Because public relations literature and research have offered little theoretical or practical guidance for how issues managers can most effectively deal with issues such as sexual assault, this study represents a promising step forward. Results for this study were obtained through 32 in-depth interviews with university issues managers, six focus groups with student populations, and approximately 92 hours of participant observation.

By focusing on inclusion, this revised model works to have utility for an array of issues that have previously fallen outside of the dominant masculine and rationale spheres that have worked to silence marginalized publics' experiences. Through adapting previous issues management models to focus on inclusion at the heart of a strategic

process, and engagement as the strategy for achieving this, this study offers a framework for ensuring more voices are heard—which enables organizations to more effectively communicate with their publics. Additionally, findings from this research may also help practitioners at different types of organizations develop better, and proactive, communication strategies for handling emotional and gendered issues as to avoid negative media attention and work to change organizational culture.

THE ISSUE WITH ISSUES MANAGEMENT: AN ENGAGEMENT APPROACH TO INTEGRATE GENDER AND EMOTION INTO ISSUES MANAGEMENT

by

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Dedication

To all survivors of sexual assault.

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Chapter 1—Introduction

Through an Executive Order signed on March 11, 2009, President Obama ushered in the creation of the White House Council on Women and Girls. The Council is comprised of the head of every federal agency and major White House office, with the purpose to "ensure that each of the agencies in which they're charged takes into account the needs of women and girls in the policies they draft, the programs they create, the legislation they support" ("About the Council on Women and Girls," n.d., para. 1) as the issues facing women "are not just women's issues" (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2009, para. 2). From the wage gap, to lack of family leave policies, to affordable child care, the Council serves to advocate that discriminatory policies towards women also negatively impact families, men, and entire communities. One of the primary issues on which the Council has focused is sexual assault.

At a speech given on January 22, 2014 to the Council, President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden addressed the issue of sexual assault. In his remarks at this event, President Obama said:

> Sexual violence is more than just a crime against individuals. It threatens our families, it threatens our communities; ultimately, it threatens the entire country. It tears apart the fabric of our communities. And that's why we're here today—because we have the power to do something it about it as a government, as a nation. We have the capacity to stop sexual assault, support those who have survived it, and bring perpetrators to justice (Jones, 2014, paras. 4-5).

The Council has focused much of its efforts in responding to issues of sexual assault in the context of college campuses. The college environment fuels the problem, as many victims are abused under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at parties (The White House Council on

Women and Girls, 2014). Additionally, assailants are often known to the victims (The White House Council on Women and Girls, 2014). Most disturbingly, campus assailants are often serial offenders. One study of men who admitted to rape or attempted rape found that 63% said they committed *on average* six rapes each (Lisak & Miller, 2002). While one in five women has been sexually assaulted in college, only one in eight report it (The White House Council on Women and Girls, 2014). The most common reasons victims do not report these crimes is that they do not want anyone to know (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000; Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, & Martin, 2009), a culture of victim-blaming that immediately turns attention towards the victim's character and credibility (Armstrong, Hamilton, & Sweeney, 2006), lack of understanding of what constitutes rape (Krebs et al., 2009), fear that the police will not believe them (Krebs et al., 2009), and uncertainty about the control they will have after reporting the incident (Gray, 2014).

Although the focus of this study is sexual assault on college campuses, it is necessary to contextualize the prevalence of these crimes for this group. While much has been published about sexual assault experiences of college women—a group characterized as being at high risk for sexual victimization—the rate of rape and sexual assault for nonstudents in the 18-24-year-old age group has been found to be 1.2 higher than for students (Sinozich & Langton, 2014). However, the same report by Sinozich and Langton (2014) indicated that students were less likely to report these crimes than nonstudents, with one primary reason for not reporting feeling like the incident was not important enough to report. If victims do not report crimes, though, it obscures the larger systemic problem of how and why this continues to occur at such alarming rates for college-aged populations across the United States.

As part of the federal push to respond to sexual assault, on January 24, 2014, President Obama announced the development of a task force to investigate this issue, as part of renewed

national dialogue around the issue of sexual assault on college campuses (Grasgreen, 2014). In April 2014, the task force released its first 20-page report on the subject, calling for universities to conduct campus climate surveys, implement bystander intervention programs, improve responses when sexual assaults are reported, and to increase transparency and law enforcement (The White House Council on Women and Girls, 2014). Additionally, in September 2014 the White House launched the "It's On Us" campaign that seeks to engage all members of campus communities in sexual assault prevention. The goal of the campaign is to "fundamentally shift the way we think about sexual assault, by inspiring everyone to see it as their responsibility to do something, big or small, to prevent it" (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2014, para. 5).

While the White House actions have played a role in demonstrating governmental support for increased efforts to reduce the number incidents of sexual assault on college campuses, grassroots activism by students has also been at the forefront of raising awareness about this issue. For example, Columbia University student Emma Sulkowicz has been a vocal activist on the issue, garnering extensive media coverage for her senior performance art display called "Carry That Weight." Dismayed with how her rape accusation was handled at Columbia University, she began carrying around her mattress as a visual protest until her alleged perpetrator is expelled from the university (Hess, 2014). Emma's single act of protest sparked a larger movement across the country called "Carry That Weight" that has further inspired, united, and ignited activism on this issue at universities across the United States (Hess, 2014).

Interest and awareness of sexual assault on campuses has reached a tipping point. Although universities have been confronted with issues related to sexual assault for decades, communicating about and ensuring compliance with the laws surrounding sexual assault have

never been more pressing. Bonnie S. Fisher, a prominent scholar of campus sex crimes, was quoted in *The New York Times* as saying the following:

> It just hasn't been on most university administrators' agendas; they don't know how to approach it, and they just haven't taken the time to be informed. It's just another issue on their desks that they're hoping doesn't cause a loss of students or bad media (Pérez-Peña & Taylor, 2014, para. 10).

For universities across the country, renewed scrutiny and enhanced government oversight of sexual assault management and reporting practices have led to bad press and negative organizational reputation, often creating a public relations crisis. For example, the Department of Education is currently investigating 124 universities in the United States for non-compliance with legislation surrounding sexual assault on college campuses (Kingkade, 2015**)**. This most recent effort to call out specific universities for lack of compliance was construed as a way to punish universities found behaving badly—the antithesis of "the good organization communicating well" (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p. 210), which has been described as the ultimate goal of public relations practice.

While universities continue to grow increasingly sophisticated in their public relations functions (DeSanto & Garner, 2001), issues like sexual assault pose a challenge for university communicators and officials. This is because these issues are emotional, complex, and often only dealt with at the point that they have become a crisis for the institution. However, public relations literature and research offer little theoretical or practical guidance for how university communicators—or, indeed, communicators working for many other types of organizations—can most effectively deal with the gendered and emotional dimensions of issues such as sexual

assault. One area of scholarship that has the potential to assist practitioners in the handling of gendered and emotional dimensions of issues is issues management.

Issues management can be defined as "an anticipatory, strategic management process that helps organizations detect and respond appropriately to emerging trends or changes in the socio-political environment" (Dougall, 2008, para. 5). Because issues develop through stages, it is possible to anticipate their emergence and approach them strategically (Botan & Taylor, 2004). Given the recent introduction of new policies regarding sexual assault and increased media scrutiny, universities are attempting to manage the issue of sexual assault at the "critical" stage, where issues are already defined and difficult to shape (Crable & Vibbert, 1985). Issues management offers a space within which to theorize about how university communicators should approach issues like sexual assault before they reach the critical stage. It is this focus on proactive, anticipatory strategies that makes issues management an appropriate perspective to understand how universities can better handle issues of sexual assault.

However, current issues management approaches are not without limitations. With a focus on the rational assessment and prioritization of issues, issues management has been positioned as a value-neutral framework (Heath & Palenchar, 2009). As Harding (2004) posited, "the more value-neutral a conceptual framework appears, the more likely it is to advance the hegemonous interests of dominant groups" (p. 6). For example, current issues management scholarship does not adequately address the gendered implications of issues of security and equality—factors that Heath and Palenchar (2009) describe as issue motivators. Women and other marginalized groups, such as racial minorities and gay and lesbian communities, are disproportionality affected when it comes to issues of security (personal safety) and equality of opportunity and movement (Dutta, Ban, & Pal, 2012; Kim & Dutta, 2009). According to

Grabosky (1995), “gender is the most consistent factor” (p. 2) in explaining who fears crime, and for women, there is greater concern about sexual assault. Therefore, risk is inherently gendered and not easily universalized as is implied in current issues management approaches. This study will attempt to fill this gap by exploring the obstacles university communicators face in addressing issues of sexual assault and to what extent the gendered and emotional dimensions of the issue create a communication challenge for issue managers.

Using sexual assault on college campuses as a context for interrogation, the purpose of this study is to offer a normative theoretical framework for expanding issues management to better account for the gendered and emotional dimensions of issues. Rather than positive description, normative theory “defines how things should be or how some activity should be carried out” (J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 1992, p. 291). Therefore, instead of simply describing how university communicators currently handle issues of sexual assault, and to what extent they may follow an issues management model, this project will work to use descriptive knowledge acquired through interviews, focus groups, and participant observation to offer a revised theory of issues management that can help communicators at different types of organizations better communicate about gendered and emotional issues. Additionally, findings from this research may also help practitioners develop better, and proactive, communication strategies for handling issues of sexual assault as to avoid negative media attention and work to change organizational culture.

The following chapters will be devoted to reviewing relevant literature that provides the rationale for this study—literature that focuses on the intersection of issues management, gender, and emotion—and explores this theoretical intersection through the issue of sexual assault on college campuses. Chapter two provides a detailed overview of how scholars have defined issues

management. This overview includes the historical progression of issues management and how it has been rearticulated and reimagined over its more than 40 years in existence. As the concept of issues plays such an integral role in the issues management framework, how issues have been defined is also explored— setting the stage for why gendered and emotional issues such as sexual assault have not been included in generally accepted definitions or conceptualizations of issues. The distinction between sex and gender is also explicated in order to understand why certain issues are relegated to the private sphere versus the public sphere—which has important implications as current issues management approaches are rooted in the public sphere (cf. Habermas, 1991). Because the socio-political context for issues is foundational to issues management (Dougall, 2008), this literature review also explores the history of activism surrounding sexual assault on college campuses and two laws that set forth what actions universities are legally required to take: Title IX and the Clery Act.

The third chapter explains the methods for this study. Rooted in the interpretivist and critical paradigms, this study explores how sexual assault is constructed and managed at the university-level through the perspectives of those tasked with managing and communicating about this issue. Furthermore, university student publics will provide their perspective to what sexual assault means and the way this issue is handled at their university. Additionally, both university officials and communicators and student publics will offer their interpretations of emotion and gender, and the ways that these dimensions are or are not included in university communications surrounding issues of sexual assault. Finally, university officials/communicators and student publics will describe their knowledge of existing and potential opportunities for dialogue about this issue on campus, and the challenges and opportunities that exist to make this happen. In order to address these research areas, qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted

with university officials around the United States responsible for communicating about issues of sexual assault, including Title IX offices, victim support services, student conduct, and university communications. Because issues management focuses on the convergence between organizational interests and public interests, six focus groups were conducted with university students to research how well they believe the university engages with them on these issues. Furthermore, I embedded with a university-sponsored sexual violence peer outreach group as a participant observer in order to understand the ways in which peer-to-peer dialogue is occurring around issues of sexual assault at a university campus.

The fourth chapter provides the results of this study, which were gathered from 32 in-depth interviews with university issues managers, six focus groups with student populations, and approximately 92 hours of participant observation. In addition to overviewing the results for each research question, this chapter breaks down the results between issues managers and student publics in order to better compare and contrast the findings for each group.

Chapter five focuses on synthesizing the results of this study with existing literature to both confirm and extend current knowledge related to the intersections of emotion, gender, and dialogue. It then explains how the results of this study help to extend an engagement approach to issues management and offers a normative model of inclusive issues management. This revised model builds upon and offers a more holistic approach to issues management to better account for emotional and gendered issues. It also offers an approach for issues managers to more effectively engage publics in dialogue throughout the issues management process.

The sixth and final chapter reviews the findings of this study, as well as explains both the theoretical and practical contributions of this project. Through adapting previous issues management models to focus on inclusion at the heart of a strategic process, and engagement as

the strategy for achieving this, this study offers a framework for helping organizations more effectively communicate with all their publics.

Chapter 2—Literature Review

The intent of this study is to develop a normative and prescriptive theoretical framework for how organizations can use issues management for communicating about issues such as sexual assault. Although sexual assault has been the more widely used term in the coverage of university campuses, I prefer the term sexual victimization as it refers to "acts with sexual purpose or content that [violate people's] bodies and/or minds" (Fisher, Daigle, & Cullen, 2010, p. 3). Although rape is a form of sexual assault, not all sexual assault is rape (RAINN, 2009). Sexual victimization is more encompassing as it also includes verbal and visual harassment, rape, stalking, and sexual coercion (Fisher et al., 2010). However, for the purposes of this study the term sexual assault will be used as it is currently the dominant term associated with the issues faced by universities. Considering acts beyond sexual assault, as the term sexual victimization does, will be important when considering the revised model of issues management in order to provide utility for a greater number of issues.

This literature review begins by exploring the development of current issues management perspectives, focusing on defining both *issues* and *management*. Because of issues management's niche within public relations, the relationship between issues management and public relations is explored in-depth, as well as the differences between issues management and risk communication. Next, the limitations of current issues management perspectives are discussed specifically regarding such perspectives' gender-neutral orientation to issues. Afterwards, scholarship on gender and emotion is introduced, with a particular focus on how construction of the public sphere and private sphere lead to the silencing of certain issues. Finally, dialogue is explored as a potential space through which to enact an engagement

orientation towards issues management to allow for the inclusion of gendered and emotional issues that are often stifled within a rational paradigm.

Issues Management

Issues management scholarship arose to address emerging activist pressures in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s that caught many corporations off guard (Heath, 2002; Heath & Palenchar, 2009). Pioneered by the work of W. Howard Chase and Ray Ewing, issues management, as both a scholarly field and area of practice, was established as a way for corporations to proactively, rather than reactively, deal with issues (Jaques, 2006). Heath (1997) defined issues management as "a strategic planning and response option that organizations can use to create and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with key stakeholders and stakeseekers" (p. 301). Highlighting the need to consider the conditions that exist outside of organizations, Dougall (2008) defined issues management as "an anticipatory, strategic management process that helps organizations detect and respond appropriately to emerging trends or changes in the socio-political environment" (para. 5). Within public relations, environmental scanning is an information-gathering process that is not inherently strategic (Lauzen, 1997). It with within the context of issues management that the information gathered is translated into strategy (Lauzen, 1997).

Jones and Chase (1979) offered the first model of issues management as a proactive public relations venture. This model proceeds in five steps. The first stage, known as issue identification, begins by considering trends (Jones & Chase, 1979). Jones and Chase (1979) defined trends as "detectable changes which precede issues," whereas an issue is "an unsettled matter which is ready for decision (p. 11). The primary goal of issue identification is to give initial priority to certain emerging issues, which are classified by type, impact and response source, geography, span of control, and salience (Jones & Chase, 1979).

After the issue identification stage, the first task of the second stage, issue analysis, is to determine the origins of the issue. Very few issues can be attributable to one source but instead result from the confluence of social, economic, and political factors (Jones & Chase, 1979). Issue analysis must consider past issue experience, which may come from both internal and external sources (Jones & Chase, 1979).

Once the issue has been analyzed, an organization then decides what to do in the stage called the issue change strategy options. This step is defined by Jones and Chase (1979) as "a choice among carefully selected methods and plans for achieving long-term corporate goals in the face of public policy issues" (p. 15-16). During this stage "an organization decides whether or not to fight, on what battlefield, and when" (Jones & Chase, 1979, p. 16). Organizations must choose how actively they manage change. A *reactive* change strategy relies on the continuation of past behavior, with the organization reactive to issue initiatives by outside forces (Jones & Chase, 1979). An *adaptive* change strategy suggests an openness to change, using planning as a tool to anticipate change and to offer accommodation to other interests (Jones & Chase, 1979). Finally, a *dynamic* change strategy anticipates and works to shape public policy decisions. Using this strategy, an organization directs change by "developing *real* solutions to *real* problems with *real* results" (Jones & Chase, 1979, p. 17, emphasis in original).

After determining which change strategy to follow, the fourth step—called the issue action program—involves developing the method or plan for responding to issues (Jones & Chase, 1979). Within this step, goals, objectives, strategies and tactics are established. In planning the issue action, financial, human, project, and information resources must be considered (Jones & Chase, 1979). In particular, the information resources include what, when, and when not to communicate (Jones & Chase, 1979).

Once the issue action program has been implemented, the fifth and final step in the model is issue evaluation. Evaluation is an objectives-based, continuous process that is ideally implemented throughout all stages of a communication program (Gregory, 2001; Paine, 2011). Using quantitative and/or qualitative methods, evaluation works to compare outcomes against preset objectives in order to understand the effectiveness of a program or strategy (Fleisher & Mahaffy, 1997; Lindenmann, 1993). Issues managers and public relations practitioners "commonly evaluate for informational, persuasive, dialogic, or image-based objectives" (Place, 2015, p. 119). While different forms of evaluation focus on varying stages of the process (e.g., front-end, formative, remedial, summative), generally all forms work to understand what could be improved, obstacles to success, and lessons learned (Friedman, 2008).

Despite a growing body of academic studies and practitioner manuals to assist with the process (Michaelson & Macleod, 2007), evaluation of communication programs is often underutilized due to vagueness of communication programs, as well as lack of time, money, sufficient knowledge of evaluation techniques, and prioritization (e.g., Baskin, Hahn, Seaman, & Reines, 2010; Hon, 1998; Macnamara, 2006; Xavier, Mehta, & Gregory, 2006; White, 2005). This evaluation is part of continual issue monitoring and performance review (Jones & Chase, 1979). Increasingly, organizations and organizational programs are being required to demonstrate their value and impact to continue to receive governmental funding (King, Steiner, Hobson, Robinson, & Clipson, 2015). For most organizations, especially those receiving governmental funding, having adequate staff, time, or budget to conduct research that generates appropriate data to statistically validate claims of impact is nearly impossible (King et al., 2015). Furthermore, it is difficult to disaggregate the effect of a particular learning experience (such as an online sexual assault prevention training video) from other learning experiences (Anderson,

Luca, & Ginns, 2003). It is important to know how, if at all, success is being evaluated by issuers managers and university student publics in educating university populations about issues of sexual assault, as well as working to decrease the prevalence of sexual assault.

Subsequent models were built off of Jones and Chase's (1979) basic framework, most notably the catalytic issue management model (Crable & Vibbert, 1985). Botan and Taylor (2004) noted that the Crable and Vibbert model specifically empowers publics as the primary force in defining and ascribing importance to issues. Crable and Vibbert (1985) argued that the Jones and Chase (1979) model, although discussed as proactive, was still highly reactive to external conditions. Crable and Vibbert instead posited that the goal of issues management is to take an issue through its life cycle, based on situational assessment and goal-establishment for issues on which an organization can catalyze change. Therefore, Crable and Vibbert (1985) advocated for a fourth strategy, which is the catalytic strategy of change. Beginning earlier in the issues management cycle than even the dynamic strategy of change, rather than focusing on trends in the environment, the catalytic strategy of change first tasks an organization with determining "what it is, what it wants to be, and how the environment could be altered to the advantage of the organization (which still seeks to be a responsible part of society)" (Crable & Vibbert, 1985, p. 10). Organizations that wish to catalyze an issue work to move an issue through each phase of the life cycle, which will be discussed in detail later.

These two models have served as the foundation for a large part of subsequent issues management theory and practice. That said, a detailed introduction of issues management literature necessitates a more thorough explication of two foundational concepts of the framework: issues and management. Understanding the foundation for how issues have been defined in scholarship is an important starting point to begin tackling why emotional and

gendered issues are so challenging to communicate about and effectively handle for organizations. Furthermore, defining management, as well as its relationship to public relations, will be crucial for differentiating the strategic management of gendered and emotional management of issues from concepts of coercion or manipulation. With this structure in mind, issues are defined first.

Issues as social construction. Issues do not simply exist out in the world waiting to be discovered. Rather, issues are socially constructed, created through a process of meaning making and discursive negotiation (Hallahan, 2001; Heath, 2006). While problems are experienced at the individual level, issues emerge from the sharing of these problems (Hallahan, 2001). Hallahan (2001) further highlighted that issues are public, whereas disputes are private. Once again, issues distinguish themselves by having a social and shared element to them. Because of this, communication plays a vital role in the construction of issues, identification, and shared meaning making "as people analyze, define, delimit, and label problems" (Hallahan, 2001, p. 28).

Issues often arise from everyday situations (Crable & Vibbert, 1985; Hallahan, 2001). Crable and Vibbert (1985) wrote that "an issue is created when one or more human agents attaches significance to a situation or perceived problem" (p. 5). Typically, people are motivated to address issues that are related to them in some way. Writing primarily in relation to a corporate context, Heath and Palenchar (2009) argued that there are four primary motivators for how issues are defined and shaped: (1) security: the extent to which business practices or products are thought to pose unreasonable risks to publics; (2) equality: assessment that all persons are treated the same; (3) environmental quality: value judgment on environmental regulation; and (4) fairness: the value on the product or exchange. Distilling issues down to their

core essence can help with issue monitoring and "sharpen strategic planning and shed light on how publics recognize and define issues" (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p. 32).

It is important to recognize that Heath and Palenchar (2009) argued that these issue motivators come from the growth of mass production and mass consumption, which can be found as key themes in public policy debates. Heath and Palenchar (2009) wrote about the interconnection between these issue motivators:

> A primary motivator of activism is people's desire to be safe and healthy coupled with their vigilance for problems of that sort that need remedying. They are sensitive to the fairness and equality of risk distribution. They don't like to bear risks that benefit others (p. 49).

In particular, Heath and Palenchar (2009) focus on issues of biotechnology, public health (in terms of air pollution, pharmaceuticals), energy, environmental quality, postcolonial civil society, working, working conditions, and immigration. While there can be an emotional reaction to these issues—such as alarm, anger, and outrage as a result of people being exposed to technologies or situations that can cause distress or harm—there is little to no focus on how emotion and gender may play into these issue motivators.

These issue motivators are important to recognize because they are at the heart of the legitimacy gap—the difference between what companies are thought to be doing and what publics expect them to be doing (Sethi, 1977). It is through discourse that the legitimacy gap between publics and organizations as to what constitutes security, equality, environmental quality, or fairness is constructed and communicated, which necessitates an overview of the rhetorical construction of issues.

Rhetorical construction of issues. Focusing on discourse allows us to define an issue as "a rhetorical problem," meaning that it "is a contestable matter of fact, evaluation, or policy" (Heath, 2006, p. 81). To add further clarity to what is meant by a rhetorical problem, Heath (2005) defined it as "an exigency that must be addressed because it raises doubt on some matter relevant to the actions and choices made by an organization" (p. 752). For example, Heath (2001) described the following as typical rhetorical problems in public relations: increasing or decreasing awareness of an issue; need for understanding between an organization, stakeholder, and/or stakeseekers; building, repairing, and/or maintaining mutually beneficial relationships; and implementing standards of social responsibility. While Heath (2001) articulated the rhetorical problem as a defining trait of an issue, the notion of a rhetorical situation helps to further understanding of how issues are constructed.

Lloyd Bitzer (1968) first articulated the idea of a rhetorical situation, arguing that "rhetorical discourse is called into existence by a situation (p. 8). Bitzer (1968) defined a rhetorical situation as consisting of an exigence, an audience, and constraints. Exigence is what creates the urgency for action, which has particular salience for the construction of issues as important. As defined by Bitzer (1968), an "exigence is an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be" (p. 11). Within a rhetorical situation, the audience consists of those who can be influenced by discourse and are mediators of change (Bitzer, 1968). Finally, constraints are people, events, objects, or relations that have the power to constrain decision-making and action to positively modify the exigence (Bitzer, 1968). To summarize, Bitzer (1968) argued that rhetoric is pragmatic and functions to produce action or change in the world.

However, Vatz (1973) questioned Bitzer's conceptualization of the rhetorical situation and its roots in a realist philosophy. Rather than rhetoric emerging from situations, Vatz (1973) instead argued that situations are constructed through rhetoric. This means that, "situations obtain their character from the rhetoric which surrounds them or creates them" (Vatz, 1973, p. 159). To put another way, rhetoric is antecedent, not subsequent, to a situation's impact. Vatz (1973) argued that Bitzer's perspective views situations as discrete, discernible, and imply obvious modifications to address the exigence. For example, in Bitzer's (1968) original piece, he utilizes the exigence of pollution and the obvious positive modification of reducing pollution to explain his perspective. However, Vatz (1973) rhetorically asks what the obvious positive modification would be for an issue like the military-industrial complex. In the case of this dissertation, what would be an obvious positive modification for confronting rape culture?

The debate between Bitzer (1968) and Vatz (1973) centers around the question of whether rhetoric should be viewed as a creation of reality or as a reflector of reality. Past approaches to issues management have been more focused from a Bitzer (1968) perspective, meaning they are intent on identifying and rectifying an exigence. Issues management is both strategic and tactical, although Jaques (2006) argued the tactical steps (such as monitoring the environment, classification and prioritization, and building coalitions) have been better defined than the broader strategic contexts of issues management. Instead, this dissertation roots itself within a Vatz (1973) conceptualization that issues are "situations made salient" (p. 160). Therefore, meaning is not simply discovered in situations but instead created by rhetors—in this case, issues managers. How issues managers interpret, respond to, and implement discourse surrounding issues is part of creating rhetorical situations.

The rhetorical construction and contestation of issues is made apparent through the advocacy and counter advocacy that occurs as organizations and interest groups seek to define and redefine issues to suit competing agendas (Jaques, 2004). Issues create uncertainty, which issue advocates work to rectify (Hallahan, 2001). Success in drawing attention to an issue is driven by the issue's "social significance, temporal relevance, complexity, and categorical precedence" (Hallahan, 2001, p. 30). Given the social construction of issues, it is easy for different parts of an organization or various publics to perceive issues in a multitude of ways (Jaques, 2004). For example, lawyers may view issues in legal terms, admissions offices are concerned with recruitment, and financial offices are likely concerned with the economic impact.

Organizations may face two types of issues—those originating outside the organization and those originating inside the organization (Hainsworth, 1990). Activists, both internal and external, often work to define issues to change the status quo or specific organizational practices (Smith & Ferguson, 2010). However, for an issue such as sexual assault on a university campus, the dichotomy between the origination of an issue within an organization and from outside the organization is complicated. Both internal and external actors are crafting this as an issue, from government actors to on-campus activists.

Issue life cycle. Issues include a foundational temporal dimension that means there may be temporary solutions to problems but no final answers—in other words, issues do not remain static (Crable & Vibbert, 1985; Hallahan, 2001). Within this idea of temporality is the development of issues through stages. Taking a management perspective, Crable and Vibbert (1985) offered a five-stage life cycle of issues: potential, imminent, current, critical, and dormant. Potential status occurs when a person or group demonstrates interest in an issue. Imminent status means that the potential of the issue is accepted by others. Current status has a

two part meaning: (1) the issue is of present interest and (2) it is an accepted topic of conversation or concern, often receiving widespread media coverage. Critical status emerges when people or groups identify with some side of the issue, making it a moment of decision or when the issue reaches fora of decision-making. Finally, the dormant stage occurs when issues are "resolved" or have been dealt with in some way. However, "the dormancy of a resolved issue can be disturbed when someone—at a later time, under new circumstances—sees the potential of the issue again" (Crable & Vibbert, 1985, p. 7).

Within Crable and Vibbert's (1985) issue stage framework, issues are never truly resolved for organizations. Instead, they are dealt with sufficiently to squelch activist and media attention or for organizations to proactively manage issues to resolve them in a manner favorable to them. Jaques (2007) noted that a weakness of issue life cycle models is that they suggest issues develop in a linear fashion and occur one at a time. In reality, though, issue development is much messier, highly contingent upon stakeholder values and interests, and at the intersection of a number of different complex factors (Jaques, 2007).

To summarize, issues are socially constructed, arising from everyday situations that are often motivated by security, equality, environmental quality, and fairness. Distinct from problems, issues develop through a life cycle. While Crable and Vibbert (1985) argued that aspects of issues might be resolved through final decisions of policymakers, certain aspects of broader issues might never go away. For example, while legal protections exist for women on college campuses, past policy interventions have clearly not been sufficient to resolve this issue. Therefore, the focus of issues management is towards effective management of issues rather than the resolution of issues.

Conceptualizations of management. The current focus of issues management scholarship is on effective *management* rather than on the nature of specific issues themselves. This emphasis is designed to demonstrate the utility of issues management approaches across contexts and issue types—although the ability of issues management as currently theorized to address issues of sexual assault will be explored later in this dissertation. Jaques (2010) argued that "issue management is not about how to manage an issue but about how to manage *because* of an issue," therefore, "the proper focus of issue management is not on issues but on management" (p. 440). Lauzen and Dozier (1994) also highlighted that issues management is not so much about issues, it is how organizations manage their action and reactions in relation to an external stimulus. Crable and Vibbert (1985) added that it is not the management of issues, but rather issue statuses, relating back to the issue life cycle discussed previously.

Given this focus on management, it is important to define what is meant by this term. Traditional management approaches in public relations research focused on developing internal structure to supervise internal processes (Grunig & Repper, 1992). Alternatively, strategic management, which is the focus of issues management, balances internal activities with strategies for dealing with external factors (Grunig & Repper, 1992). Bracker (1980) defined strategic management as entailing "the analysis of internal and external environments of firms to maximize the utilization of resources in relation to objectives" (p. 221). With a similar focus on the environment, Jemison (1981) defined strategic management as "the process by which general managers of complex organizations develop and use a strategy to co-align their organization's competences and the opportunities and constraints in the environment" (p. 633). Grunig and Repper (1992) wrote that "[m]anagers who manage strategically do so by balancing the mission of the organization—what it is, what it wants to be, and what it wants to do—with what the

environment will allow or encourage it to do (p. 119). Understanding strategic management is important for understanding the distinction, and overlap, between issues management and public relations.

Issues management versus public relations. The relationship and distinction between issues management and public relations is debated, particularly in regards to which of the two is the umbrella concept. Miller (1987) wrote that "[i]ssue management isn't quite public relations. Neither is it government relations, nor public affairs, nor lobbying, nor crisis management, nor futurism, nor strategic planning. It embraces all of these disciplines, and maybe a few more" (p. 125). Toth (2006) highlighted that public affairs, as a specialization of public relations focused on public policy, seems similar to issues management. However, "issues management refers specifically to a strategic planning process" (Toth, 2006, p. 501). While Heath's (1997) definition of issues management as "a strategic planning and response option that organizations can use to create and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with key stakeholders and stakeseekers" (p. 301) sounds similar to many definitions of public relations, this study takes the perspective adopted by Bowen (2004) that issues management "is the highest decision-making function of public relations" (p. 65). Botan and Taylor (2004) similarly called issues management the strategic core of public relations. To put it most succinctly, public relations practitioners at the managerial level are often issues managers, but not all issues managers are public relations practitioners.

Publics and issues are the core concepts of public relations (Botan & Taylor, 2004). Since the definition of issues has been established for this study, it is also necessary to briefly define publics. For this study, the process-oriented definition posed by Botan and Taylor (2004) is chosen as the primary understanding of publics. Botan and Taylor (2004) explained publics as a

"continuing process of agreeing on an interpretation because whether a group of people understands that it shares an interest at a particular time determines if a public exists" (Botan & Taylor, 2004, p. 655). When focusing on engagement as a process, Leitch and Motion (2010) argued that publics are "groups of people who can position their own identities and interests and who perhaps also form some kind of shared understanding of their collective interests and elements of shared identity" (p. 108). Within this perspective, the relationship between publics and issues is tantamount. If a group of people (a public) attaches significance to a matter, then it will become an issue (Botan & Taylor, 2004). Alternatively, if no public exists, then no issue exists.

In their overview of the state of the public relations field, Botan and Taylor (2004) argued the greatest shift in public relations scholarship has been from a functional to a co-creational perspective. A functional perspective views publics and communication as a means to achieve organizational ends (Botan & Taylor, 2004). Within the functional perspective, the primary relationship is between the public relations practitioner and the media (Botan & Taylor, 2004). In contrast, the co-creational perspective views publics as co-creators of meaning and communication as the mechanism for shared meanings, interpretations, and goals. Rather than being viewed as a means to an end, publics are seen as partners in the meaning-making process (Botan & Taylor, 2004). The co-creational perspective is inherently long-term in orientation and relational, with the primary interest between groups and organization (Botan & Taylor, 2004). For Crable and Vibbert (1985), publics were the primary force in the co-creation of issues in their issues management framework.

When an organization seeks to initiate change, it must communicate or engage with its publics. Another way to understand the co-creational approach is through the development of

zones of meaning (Heath, 1994b). Zones of meaning are “shared realities of members of particular publics” (Leitch & Motion, 2010, p. 102). Favorable zones of meaning are the result of successful interactions between organizations and publics, although the ability and desire to engage in such interaction is based on resources available and is context dependent (Heath, 1994b; Leitch & Motion, 2010).

The process-oriented, co-creational approach put forth by Botan and Taylor (2004) focuses on the shared interpretation that publics bring to an issue. For people tasked with handling issues like sexual assault at an organization, it is necessary to understand what aspects of the issue are shared or not, particularly the aspects that are not currently or able to be codified into laws or policies. Additionally, given the need to look at publics as partners in meaning-making, consulting students in this process is of vital importance for the issue of sexual assault on college campuses.

Issues management versus risk communication. As a sub-specialty of public relations, risk communication is often conflated with issues management, so it is important to clarify the distinctions between each area. However, while distinct, issues management and risk communication are not totally dichotomous. As Heath and Palenchar (2009) wrote, “[a]ny issue may result from a crisis, which is a risk manifested. A risk may create an issue, especially once it has become a crisis. Issues become contested interpretations of risks and crises. A crisis may become an issue” (p. 80). As opposed to crisis communication, issues management works to identify and deal with issues before they become crises (Miller, 1999). While often used interchangeably, the definitions of risk and crisis are distinct and intimately related to issues of temporality. A risk emerges long before a crisis occurs (Sellnow, Ulmer, Seeger, & Littlefield, 2009). Hermann (1963) identified three distinguishing characteristics of a crisis: surprise, threat,

and short response time. Reynolds and Seeger (2005) noted that risk communication is future-oriented, whereas crisis communication is focused on a specific event that is occurring or has occurred. Furthermore, risk communication has the luxury of long-term planning whereas crisis communication focuses on the short-term to address an immediate problem (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005). Organizations must communicate about both potential risks and occurring crises.

While the distinction between crisis communication and issues management is clearer, on the surface issues management and risk communication seem very similar. In order to explore the differences between the two areas, it is important to have a clear understanding of how risk communication is defined. Although definitions of risk communication differ, one of the most widely accepted definitions is from Covello (1992), who wrote that risk communication is a "process of exchanging information among interested parties about the nature, magnitude, significance, or control of a risk" (p. 359). Heath (1994a) highlighted that risk communication can range from topics of health and environmental risks to crime and drunk driving. As a field, risk communication grew in the 1980s out of legal and regulatory mechanisms that required organizations, particularly those in chemical and manufacturing industries, to inform communities of potential consequences of their existence in community right-to-know initiatives (Palenchar, 2008). Importantly, just like the previous discussion of issues, risks are social and cultural constructions that do not concern most people until social and cultural leaders warn people about them (Johnson & Covello, 1987).

An issues management approach to risk argues that "the definition of risk is essentially a political act" (Kasperson, 1992, p. 155). While experts often define risk in technical, narrow ways, the publics for which risk must be communicated often have a view of risk that incorporates more value-laden considerations such as equality and controllability (Heath &

Palenchar, 2009). Therefore, "the issue is not whether there are legitimate, rational considerations, but how they integrate them into risk analyses and policy decisions" (Slovic, 1992, p. 150).

Heath and Palenchar (2009) explained the relationship between issues management and risk communication in the following way:

> Risk communication and issues management merge at the point where key publics feel deeply that companies and governmental organizations (and even nonprofits, including activists) create or allow risks to occur that will affect the health, safety, environmental quality, and economic well-being of community residents and users of products (p. 314).

People think positively or negatively about risks suffered, and one factor that influences this perception is the potential stigma that results from the risk (Slovic, 1992). Due to the potential of stigmatization, people discuss and evaluate the effects of a risk in a way that "does not rely solely on empirical assessment but also on values" (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p. 340). For health and safety risks—which would encompass issues such as sexual assault—Heath and Palenchar (2009) noted a gap in key aspects that define these terms and their relationships from an issues management approach. In particular, the gendered and emotional aspects of health and safety risks have been underdeveloped in issues management—which will be a key contribution of this dissertation.

Advancing Issues Management through Engagement

So far this literature review has explored the two primary issues management models developed by Jones and Chase (1979) and Crable and Vibbert (1985), which have dominated the field for decades. Due to the social and rhetorical construction of issues (Hallahan, 2001; Heath, 2001; Heath, 2006), and the role that rhetoric plays in constructing the context in which issues

arise (Vatz, 1993), issues management scholarship began to focus more prominently on the meaning-making process between organizations and stakeholders. As the field of public relations has embraced a more co-creational perspective (Botan & Taylor, 2004), it makes sense that issues management is experiencing a paradigm shift as well (Kent, Taylor, & Veil, 2011). Finding the existing approaches inadequate, Taylor et al. (2003) instead advocated for an engagement approach to issues management.

Taylor and Kent (2014) defined engagement as "part of dialogue and through engagement, organizations and publics can make decisions that create social capital. Engagement is both an orientation that influences interactions and the approach that guides the process of interactions among groups" (p. 384). Engagement goes beyond two-way communication and focuses on the meaning-making process between organizations and stakeholders (Johnston, 2014). Considering the interconnectedness between organizations and social environments, Cunliffe (2009) highlighted the need for "collective organizational reflexivity," which can be defined as an awareness of "the privileging of certain groups and the marginalization of others, but highlights the relational, and therefore moral, nature of our social and organizational experiences" (p. 409).

Moving away from the historical models of issues management that focus on proactive or reactive actions (cf. Crable & Vibbert, 1985; Jones & Chase, 1979), the engagement approach posits that relationship building is the most ethical issues management (Taylor et al., 2003). There are three primary assumptions guiding the engagement approach to issues management: (1) all organizations seek to maximize outcomes; (2) publics are a resource upon which organizations are dependent; and (3) organization-public relationships are foundational (Taylor et al., 2003). As stated by Taylor et al. (2003), "an engagement approach posits that it is the

convergence of organizational interests with public interests that provide both parties with the greatest opportunity for issue resolution through communication" (p. 261). Trust, accountability, and transparency are built through engagement and dialogic activities (Burchell & Cook, 2006). Ultimately, dialogic engagement enables organizations and publics to interact, allowing for greater understanding, goodwill, and shared view of the world (Taylor & Kent, 2014).

Rather than developing an entirely new framework, an engagement approach combines aspects of the systems approach, the strategic approach, and the rhetorical approach to issues management (Taylor et al., 2003). The systems and strategic approaches focus on trends and policies, while a rhetorical approach looks at the language surrounding participation in socio-political arenas (Taylor et al., 2003). Taking aspects of these approaches, the engagement approach works to evaluate the ways in which public debate is encouraged or discouraged, and how the convergence of organization and public interests influences decision-making surrounding issues (Taylor et al, 2003). Therefore, the engagement approach focuses on issues management as active dialogue or engagement between the organization and its publics as the most efficacious way to manage issues (Taylor et al., 2003). Adopting an engagement approach helps to overcome viewing publics through an organizational lens and instead focuses on the relationship that exists between organizations and publics. Taylor et al. (2003) posited that examining the strength of communicative relationships between organizations and their publics would expand understandings of issues management.

Relationship building is a key dimension of public relations (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Ferguson, 1984; Ledingham, 2006). Broom et al. (1997)—among the first scholars to offer theoretical propositions for the study of relationships within public relations—noted that "it would be difficult to overstate the importance of the communication linkage in organization-

public relationships" (p. 94). Given the focus that an engagement approach to issues management places on the organization-public relationship, it is important to understand how this perspective has developed in public relations.

Broom et al. (1997) noted that systems theory has served as a useful theory in public relations, highlighting that from a systems theory perspective interacting units develop patterns of interaction that form the structure of the system. The system is based on the interdependence and relatedness of elements. Mutual adaptation forms the essence of any interpersonal interaction. Focusing on the exchange perspective similar to interorganizational communication research, relationships are defined as attributes of the exchange or transfer between participants (Broom et al., 1997). In particular, Broom et al. (1997) highlighted antecedents and consequences of relationships as separate from, but important to understanding, how relationships develop. Antecedents to relationships are perceptions, motives, needs, and behaviors that are contingences or causes in the formation of the relationship (Broom et al., 1997). Consequences of the relationship are the outputs that have the effects of changing the environment and of achieving, maintaining, or changing goal states both inside and outside the organization (Broom et al., 1997). Grunig and Huang (2000) expanded upon the work of Broom et al. (1997) and determined that the four focal characteristics of a quality organization-public relationship are trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction.

Taking it a step further, and rather than focusing on what the specific attributes of relationships are (as well as antecedents and consequences), Ledingham (2006) proposed a general theory of relationship management for public relations. The premise of this theory is that effectively managing organizational relationships around common interests and shared goals, over time, results in mutual understanding and benefit for interacting organizations and publics.

Relationship management moves the direction of public relations away from impact measures (such as number of stories placed in mass media) to evaluation based on relationship quality. This has shifted the focus away from communication to relationships, with the value of communication based on its contribution to relationships, which is in line with the perspective offered by Taylor et al. (2003) that "communication quality, quantity, length of time, feedback, and resulting change are measures of issues management effectiveness" (p. 262).

However, the way that relationships have been traditionally understood in public relations research does not take into account that "relationships are discursive constructions of gender, power, and diversity that are exhibited through communicative acts" (Aldoory, 2005, pp. 678-679). Organizational relationships have been constructed within androcentric notions of how modern organizations work, what their goals are, and exchange relationships. In other words, there has been less focus in public relations on the social construction of concepts such as gender and power their ability to influence meanings (Aldoory, 2005). For this study, concepts of power and gender will be explored most explicitly as a way to better incorporate emotional and gendered issues into the issues management framework.

Introducing Gender to Issues Management

To understand the ways in which power affects organization-public relationships, Aldoory (2005) called for research that examines how discursive practices are used to build or maintain relationships by controlling meanings for the organization. Aldoory (2005) argued that public relations is often used to legitimate organizational interests over public interests. Instead, power should be understood as discursive legitimacy, which is exhibited through control over meanings in or about organizations (Aldoory, 2005).

In public relations research, gender is primarily measured and defined as a classification system based on biology—gender as female (Aldoory, 2005). However, Aldoory (2005) argued that gender should be studied as a constructed and problematic concept that defines women, men, the public relations profession, and the theories scholars develop for the field. By considering the social construction of relationships as gendered, it becomes clear that "modern organizations and business practices are constructed within a masculinist ideology that still values competition, monetary definitions of success, and exchange relationships" (Aldoory, 2005, p. 679). Given the foundational role that the organization-public relationship plays in engagement approaches to issues management, it is important to dismantle the idea that theories like issues management are gender-neutral. It is from this perspective that the inclusion of gender within an issues management framework is explored.

Current approaches to issues management arguably assume a neutral orientation that reflects male-oriented organizational value systems. As Harding (2004) posited, "the more value-neutral a conceptual framework appears, the more likely it is to advance the hegemonous interests of dominant groups" (p. 6). Patriarchal and hegemonic systems operate in ways that make them invisible until the inherent biases and assumptions within are brought to light (Roper, 2005). Taking a critical perspective of issues management affords the chance to expand the current framework to account for the gendered nature of issues and environments in which they arise.

Although interrelated, sex and gender are different concepts. Most importantly for this project, gender is not a synonym for women (Scott, 1986), although women are disproportionately affected by issues of sexual assault[1]. Gender, as a category, does include

[1] In a nationally representative survey of adults conducted for the Centers for Disease Control, 18.3% of women and 1.4% of men reported experiencing rape at some point in their lives (Black et al., 2011).

women, but signifies beyond them (Wiegman, 2002). Gender as a constructed socialization rather than as female/not female emphasizes the fact that everyone is gendered. Therefore, men are not exclusively perpetrators but also victims of a gendered system. Using Wood's (1997) articulation as a starting point, "sex is a designation based on biology, while gender is socially and psychologically constructed" (p. 23). Gender emerged as a rejection of the biological determinism implicit in terms like sex, although "gender is…a social category imposed on a sexed body" (Scott, 1986, p. 1056). It is sexual hierarchy, though, that produces and consolidates gender (Butler, 2008). Instead, "the use of gender emphasizes an entire system of relationships that may include sex, but is not directly determined by sex or directly determining sexuality" (Scott, 1986, p. 1057). Daymon and Demetrious (2013) also defined gender as a "fluid and negotiated process performed through every social interaction" (p. 7). To reiterate, sex is biological while gender is constructed through social interactions.

The construction of gender is about the construction of power. Scott (1986) defined gender as "a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (p. 1067). Given issue management's public policy orientation, it is necessary to consider the "specific ways in which politics constructs gender and gender constructs politics" (Scott, 1986, p. 1070). Within public relations, Demetrious (2013) argued that the idea of gender is an "imposition on subjects engaging with the politics of repression as a means of legitimizing and silencing discussions about sexual dominance and inequality" (p. 20). Specifically, if public policy is highlighted as the area in which to resolve issues, the ways in which politics can repress and suppress gender must be considered.

In understanding gender, Rakow and Nastasia (2009) make an important distinction between feminist theory for public relations—emphasizing how gendered people advance the field and discipline of public relations— and critical feminist theory of public relations—the role that public relations plays in the quality of gendered people's lives in society. This study is focused on the latter. In a review of feminist theory in public relations, Golombisky (2015) found that scholarship has mostly focused on practitioners and to a less extent the organization, with little to no research on publics or social influence and responsibility. In communication, feminist theory examines gender, social change, difference, voice, representation, access, and power (Golombisky, 2015; Rakow & Wackwitz, 2004; Wackwitz & Rakow, 2007). Typically, feminist theories have sought to explain "the causes and conditions in which men are more powerful and men's production, ideas, and activities are seen as having greater value and higher status than women's" (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2010, p. 2). Golombisky (2015) recommended that we shift our goals from gender equality to social justice to be more encompassing of public relations as a practice, discipline, and social phenomenon. In particular, "feminist public relations theory should be relevant beyond the mechanics of how public relations works to emphasize social justice dimensions of public relations practice in wider society" (Golombisky, 2015, p. 389).

This project moves forward to add a gendered perspective to issues management in order to make the theory more heuristic and valid for communicating about issues such as sexual assault. However, this dissertation will not go into depth into the varied theories and perspectives under the larger umbrella of feminism as "feminist theory, like law and policy, struggles toward inclusivity, given expanding and shifting categories and concepts regarding difference, the body, and lived experience" (Golombisky, 2015, p. 391). Importantly, this project adopts a feminist critique that politics holds on to a separation of public and private spheres, assigns gender-

specific connotations to them (male and female), and implies a hierarchy (Wischermann & Mueller, 2004). By being assigned to the private sphere, women's lives, experiences, work, and safety have been devalued (Wischermann & Mueller, 2004). With this in mind, it is necessary to reconceive public relations theory (of which issues management can be considered) in a way that bypasses artificial boundaries—such as public and private spheres—as this perpetuates the silencing of certain issues (Creedon, 1993). The discussion now turns to how the public and private spheres have been constructed and how this relates to adding a gendered perspective to issues management.

Public and private spheres. Discourses on the public and private spheres have privileged the public over the private (Holtzhausen, 2012). One reason for the dearth of addressing topics of sexual assault in public relations may have to do with its general relegation to the private sphere. The public/private dichotomy becomes salient in representations of women and why "women's issues" are oftentimes made invisible. A discussion of the public and private spheres necessitates a nod to Habermas' (1991) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, which explicates the relationship between the public and private spheres in a historical epoch. In this classic work, Habermas (1991) described the rise and decline of a historically specific form of the public sphere: the liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere. The public sphere was a place where private individuals and government authorities could meet to have rational-critical debates about public matters (Sommerfeldt, 2013). The private sphere, in contrast, would include issues of family and home—issues deemed inappropriate or irrelevant for public consideration.

Habermas' work has been criticized for the implicit exclusivity associated with the public sphere in that it was for upper-class white males and only considered issues of public concern

(Fraser, 1991). Despite claiming accessibility for all, the public sphere rested on exclusions (Fraser, 1991). Women, the uneducated, minorities, and the poor were excluded from the historical public sphere, and masculine gender constructs were viewed as rational, with new gender norms relegating women to the private, domestic sphere versus the public sphere (Fraser, 1991). Landes (1988) wrote that "as the opposite of private, the public pertains to the people as a whole, to community or nationwide concerns, to the common good, to things open in sight and to those things that may be used or shared by all members of the community" (p. 3). Therefore, issues that cannot be shared by all members of the community, such as the experience of assault as the result of being a woman or minority, are often relegated as private matters. Rather than focusing on the particular historical moment described by Habermas, though, Fraser (1991) argued that the most utility can be derived by seeing the public sphere as a conceptual resource.

Due to the inherent failure of public sphere theory to account for women's involvement in the public sphere and full participation in civil society**,** Fraser (1991) argued for the development of counterpublic theory. Within this theoretical paradigm, alternative publics are created by groups not represented by the dominant discourses or power structures, which she termed "subaltern counterpublics" (Fraser, 1991, p. 123). Due to the circulation of dominant discourses of disempowerment, a counterpublic maintains an awareness of its subordinate status (Warner, 2002). Subaltern counterpublics are defined as "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (Fraser, 1991, p. 123). For women in particular, Felski (1989) argued that "the experience of discrimination, oppression, and cultural dislocation provides the impetus for the development of a self-consciously oppositional identity" namely a "feminist counter-public sphere" (p. 167). However, Cartwright

(1998) cautioned against viewing counterpublics as solely oppositional as “many alternative publics are forged around the increasingly special interests that constitute the global market” (p. 121). Counterpublics can be formed as a response to an impetus, rather than oppositional or more special interest focused. Asen (2000) advised against the binary construction of counterpublics and publics:

> Consent versus dissent, public versus counter—fixing these terms as binary oppositions restricts theory and criticism. The movement towards multiplicity in public sphere theory belies such binaries. Theorists and critics would do well to seek out relations among publics, counterpublics, and spheres as advocates in the “actually existing” public sphere construct these relationships through discursive engagement (p. 35).

It was the radical branch of the women’s movement that first took up the issue of rape in the 1970s and broke the taboo of public discussion of sexual issues (Bevacqua, 2000)—in essence, bringing the private issues into the public sphere. Because of consciousness-raising groups—groups that aimed to gain a better understanding of women’s oppression by bringing women together to discuss and analyze their lives— and speak outs, women “came to realize that this experience, which they had previously interpreted as simply a personal issue, instead had political roots because it was common” (Bevacqua, 2000, p. 42). Allowing for the inclusion of emotional, oftentimes traumatic, topics such as sexual assault into public venues allows for the “presence and promise of cultural formations that bring traumatic historics into the public sphere and use accounts of affective experience to transform our sense of what constitutes a public sphere” (Cvetkovich, 2003, pp. 15-16), which typically fall outside of institutional practices.

However, Warner (2002) argued that understanding the distinction between public and private is not as simple as viewing them as dichotomous. In fact, “privacy is publicly

constructed" (Warner, 2002, p. 62). Warner (2002) explained this concept through the example of "the closet" for the gay and lesbian communities (p. 52). Although individuals are often blamed for being closeted, as Warner (2002) argued, "no one ever created a closet for him- or herself" (p. 52). The closet is created by heteronormative assumptions that are part of public discourse. Yet, the shame and deception felt by individuals for being closeted feels private (Warner, 2002). But, in an important sense these private feelings are publicly constructed. Similarly, for issues like sexual assault, there is a shame and guilt experienced at the individual level because of how women's relationship to sexuality is constructed in the public sphere. In the next section, the relationship between the public/private sphere and emotions is explored in depth.

Emotions. The gendered construction of issues determines what issues fall into the realm of public and private spheres, with emotional issues being considered private. Public issues are rational, whereas emotional issues are irrational and as a result are not of public concern (Sommerfeldt, 2013). Emotions, seen as antithetical to the rationality of risk and issues management, are inadequately theorized within this framework. Jaques (2004) wrote that it has long been known that issues are hardest to manage when they are centered on emotions and feelings, and other less "objective" attributes. Emotions are a core part of action and decisions (Fineman, 2000**)**. Motivating action and building relationships are processes intimately linked to public relations and issues management.

There is no clear or finite definition of emotions. Although related to and often used synonymously with the terms feeling and affect, emotion is a distinct concept. According to Shouse (2005), feelings are personal and biographical, affects are prepersonal (outside of consciousness), and emotions are social. Constructed in this way, emotions are typically

interpersonal or group-based responses (Harlos & Pinder, 2000). Because of this interpersonal or group-based response, "[e]motions are intersubjective, a product of the way systems of meaning are created and negotiated between people" (Fineman, 2000, p. 2). Put another way, emotions hold together social structures, serving as a relational "glue" that binds people together (Turner & Stets, 2005, p. 1).

Although Fineman (2000) argued that emotions influence and shape all human activity, there is still a tendency to subordinate emotion to logic and rationality. As feminist researchers have argued, the subordination of emotions works to subordinate the feminine (Ahmed, 2004). There is a need to deconstruct this phallologocentrism—privileging of the masculine in the construction of meaning—to put forth the voice of women in society and our scholarship (Holtzhausen, 2012).

Because all issues are socially constructed, I do not seek to argue that there are specifically emotional or gendered issues. Emotions are not excisable from issues—they characterize and inform them (Fineman, 2000). However, certain issues are emotionalized, such as workplace envy, intimacy, harassment, and stress (Yeomans, 2007). There are multiple facets to issues, of which emotion and gender have been inadequately considered in public relations scholarship. In this section I unpack the intimate relationship between emotion and gender as they work in tandem to maintain current power structures.

Emotion and Gender

Research into emotion is inextricably linked to the politics of gender (Bridgen, 2011). Emotions are related to gendered communication because of the way gender has been socially constructed. Because of this, emotion and gender have traditionally been bifurcated along the masculine/rational, feminine/emotional lines. Masculinity is viewed as rational whereas

femininity is viewed as emotional, irrational and mostly undesirable. Jasper (2011) argued that "[f]eminism inspired a broader critique…for ignoring, denying, and denigrating the role of emotions in social and political life" (p. 288). Although Jasper (2011) called the connection between women and emotions "unfair and damaging as a norm" (p. 288), he noted that it is perhaps accurate as a description. Due to this, the intersection of emotion and gender is stigmatization (Jasper, 2011). This stigmatization and subordination is reflected in erasures from dominant structures where "knowledge is articulated, debated, circulated, and reified" (Kim & Dutta, 2009, p. 148)—in other words, the public sphere.

Like issues, emotions contain a temporal dimension. Emotions have been defined as states that last a limited amount of time (Harlos & Pinder, 2000). Jasper (2011) argued that there has been an overemphasis on reflex emotions, which are reactions to the physical and social environments, often quick to appear and subside, and are accompanied by facial expressions and bodily changes. Reflex emotions include anger, fear, joy, surprise, and shock, among others (Jasper, 2011). The focus on reflex emotions has created a paradigm for all emotions which has exaggerated "the intensity, suddenness, and disruptive capacity of emotions" (Jasper, 2011, p. 287). In contrast to reflex emotions, there are two types of relatively stable, long-term emotions: (1) affective loyalties, and (2) moral emotions (Jasper, 2011). Affective loyalties are attachments or aversions, such as love and hate, liking and disliking (Jasper, 2011). Moral emotions are feelings of approval and disapproval based on moral intuitions and principles, such as compassion, shame, guilt and pride (Jasper, 2011).

Issues management is an appropriate model for integrating considerations of emotion and gender into communication processes precisely because it is focused on proactive management. However, it is important to not confuse management with manipulation. Management entails the

inclusion and fostering of spaces where emotion and gender are considered; it is not a way to stifle, direct, or inappropriately guide the expression of these emotions (Bowen, 2004). As Fineman (2000) wrote, "[f]using emotion with control reflects a mutuality of the rational and the emotional" (p. 7). However, the challenge for issue managers is to adequately fuse emotion with control to ensure that voices are heard and appropriate communicative actions are taken.

Past research has viewed emotional experiences as largely static. However, Nabi and Green (2015) began to explore how emotion and emotional shifts created by a story may have implications for social sharing, message and topic elaboration, and repeated consumption. One way that emotion has been found to be successfully integrated into communicative messages is through narrative (Nabi & Green, 2015). Not only are "[n]arratives are a compelling way of conveying information, but they are also valued for their ability to evoke emotions" (Nabi & Green, 2015, pp. 137-138). As part of an engagement approach to issues management, dialogue may offer a way for the mutuality of rationality and emotionality to be achieved.

Dialogue and Issues Management

The concept of dialogue has been explored within the field of public relations for several decades, although it has its roots can be traced to the disciplines of philosophy, rhetoric, psychology, and relationship communication (Kent & Taylor, 2002). Ron Pearson's work on dialogue as an ethical relationship building tool is often demarcated as the earliest discussion of the topic in the field (Kent & Taylor, 2002). According to Pearson (1989), "public relations is best conceptualized as the management of interpersonal dialectic" (p. 177). Since that time, within public relations scholarship dialogue has meant anything from communicating about issues with publics (Grunig & White, 1992) to debate (Heath, 2000).

Within public relations, dialogue is often conflated with two-way symmetrical communication (Stoker & Tusinski, 2006). However, dialogue and two-way symmetrical communication are rooted in completely different philosophies (Theunissen & Wan Noordin, 2012). Two-way symmetrical communication, based in systems theory, "is inherently about control and balance while dialogue is about giving up some control" (Theunissen & Wan Noordin, 2012, p. 7). Within public relations, the idea of giving up control of communication can be difficult. Organizations cannot only be willing to engage in dialogue but must also understand the nature of dialogue in order to relinquish control and allow publics to communicate openly and honestly (Theunissen & Wan Noordin, 2012). Giving up control is inherently risky and may negatively impact achieving predetermined objectives—which can be antithetical to modern approaches to strategic public relations planning (e.g., Austin & Pinkleton, 2006; Smith, 2013).

Turning back to issues management as the highest decision making function of public relations, Heath and Palenchar (2009) argued that dialogue is foundational to communicating issues. Previously, dialogue surrounding issues has been based on argumentative approaches and structures (Heath & Palenchar, 2009), which taps into the rationality bias propagated by earlier models of issues management. Such communicative structures are based on rational and logical appeals that are foundational to the public sphere (Habermas, 1991). For example, this view of dialogue is based on relevant facts, applying evaluative premises, and drawing conclusions based upon these facts and premises (Heath & Palenchar, 2009). This conceptualization of dialogue limits the inclusion of issues that entail a high degree of emotionality and ambiguity. Reconceptualizing dialogue within issues management may allow for the inclusion of emotional and gendered issues, working to recognize inherent challenges of defining certain issues, inequity in issue motivation, and the limitations of a public policy perspective. An engagement

approach to public relations may offer the ability to move beyond the rational and argumentative structure of dialogue proposed by Heath and Palenchar (2009), offering a model for communication for issues that are emotional.

Taylor et al. (2003) noted that more research needs to be done to understand dialogue as a function of an engagement approach to issues management. While dialogue has been argued to be a key part of public relations and communicating issues, less theoretical work has been conducted to understand what makes a communicative interaction dialogic. Dialogue, while an attractive ideal towards which to strive, is difficult to operationalize in practice (Theunissen & Wan Noordin, 2012). In order to better operationalize dialogue, Kent and Taylor (2002) argued that there are five key features of dialogue: (1) mutuality—a collaborative orientation and mutual equality for participants; (2) propinquity—consulting publics on issues that influence them and a willingness by publics to articulate demands; (3) empathy—climate of supportiveness and trust; (4) risk—potential for vulnerability and unanticipated consequences; and (5) commitment—marked by honesty and forthrightness and working towards a common understanding. This focus on empathy makes Kent and Taylor's (2002) view of dialogue a useful concept for exploring issues that are highly sensitive, emotional, and gendered in public relations. In particular, this conceptualization of dialogue places the emphasis on the relationship between organizations and publics, allowing for more interpersonal approaches to discussing and integrating issues that do not fit into the rational paradigm.

Taylor and Kent (2014) noted that the concept of engagement emerged as a feature of the principles of propinquity. Dialogic propinquity means that "publics are consulted in matters that influence them, and for publics, it means that they are willing and able to articulate their demands to organizations" (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 26). Ultimately, engagement focuses on the

willingness of interactants to immerse themselves fully into the encounter, which requires presentness, accessibility, and a willingness on all parts to interact (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

The role that the Internet and social media can play in facilitating dialogue has continued to be a popular focus within public relations research (e.g., Briones, Kuch, Liu, & Yin, 2011; Henderson & Bowley, 2010; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001). With 94 percent of first year college students using social media sites (Tunheim, 2012), this may be an important space to explore dialogue between university student publics and issues managers. Anti-rape social media efforts also have strong roots within the college campus community (Maxwell, 2014). Herring, Job-Sluder, Sheckles, and Barb (2002) argued that online forums appeal to vulnerable publics seeking support such as "members of minority, social and political groups such as homosexuals, racial minorities, and feminists" (p. 371). These virtual spaces are appealing to victims of inequality as they can coexist in a space that acknowledges their pain and isolation (Dixon, 2014).

Using online public platforms to share private collective trauma further blurs the distinction between what issues are considered private and what issues are considered public. Women's organizations, politicians, activists, and survivors alike are using these technologies to increase awareness of the injustices women face on a daily basis. Issues of sexual victimization have been a particular focus of this online collective action. As Maxwell (2014) wrote:

> As long as we…continue raising our collective voices – using powerful tools like social media and refusing to stay silent – not only will the world be unable to deny the realities of rape culture, but the epidemic could actually, eventually be eradicated (p. 1).

Social media engagement has been "heralded as the new paradigm for public relations in the 21st century" that requires a "mindfulness and awareness of the power distribution in public

relations and its role in shaping…communicative relationships" (Johnston, 2014, p. 382). Although engagement has been viewed as a general feature of social media (i.e., liking, sharing, commenting), Smith and Gallicano (2015) argued that engagement is a distinct concept involving cognitive and emotional immersion that may not characterize all social media. Kang (2014) argued that the emotional attachment of engagement is driven by positive affectivity, affective commitment, and empowerment of publics. However, too often social media engagement is equated with the organization-public relationship, but this inherently prioritizes organizational meanings and actions in a space designed to "enable voices to be heard without any voice dominating the dialogue" (Bruce & Shelley, 2010, p. 4). In particular, this study is interested in engagement that occurs at a peer-to-peer level, in additional to an organization-public level, to understand the potential power differentials.

Public relations research has not focused on the ways these types of online spaces may facilitate the inclusion of emotional and gendered issues such as sexual assault into dialogue that other forums may not. Universities may be missing an opportunity to engage in dialogue with students in these online spaces to which they are flocking. An engagement approach to issues management may offer ways to better understand the dialogic potential of online spaces for convergence of organizational and public interests in addressing sexual assault on campus.

In addition to expanding the spaces *where* dialogue around sexual assault can occur between organizations and publics, we may need to reconceive *how* dialogue can occur. Dialogue can go beyond the words themselves and encompass the artistic, the performative, and the unconventional (Boyd & Van Sleete, 2009; Droogsma, 2009; Weaver, 2010). Speaking publicly about issues such as rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and other such issues often proves impossible because of the silence and judgment associated with them (Droogsma,

2009). Speaking through art, though, creates discourses outside of words, and provides a readily available and less inhibited means through which marginalized persons can share their stories (Droogsma, 2009). For example, The Clothesline Project, an activist art project, "aims to break the silence surrounding violence against women by displaying survivors' stories collectively as public art" (Droogsma, 2009, p. 481). Inspired by the success of the AIDS Quilt, artist Rachel Carey-Harper chose a clothesline to publicly memorialize victims and survivors of gendered violence (Droogsma, 2009). In addition to serving as a healing space for survivors, The Clothesline Project has also been credited with playing a significant role in encouraging the passage of the first Violence Against Women Act in 1994 (Droogsma, 2009).

Going back to the example from the introduction of Emma Sulkowicz, she was able to use her senior visual arts project of carrying around her dorm mattress to symbolize her status as a survivor of rape to create a renewed dialogue around this issue. From an issues management perspective, (Heath & Palenchar, 2009), the ability of art (and other forms of "unconventional" discourse) to serve as a dialogue facilitating tool and change agent needs to be considered more in both issues management and public relations literature more broadly. By extending issues management beyond rational and masculine approaches, new approaches to dealing with re-emerging issues can be more fully considered.

Extending Issues Management

As argued in the preceding sections, the current issue with issues management is that it does not adequately account for the gendered and emotional dimensions of issues. The overview of the literature on issues management, gender, and dialogue has shown that current theorizing of issues management includes a rational bias that subtly precludes the inclusion of gendered and emotional topics such as sexual assault. While dialogue is argued to be an important tool for

issues managers, as conceived by Heath and Palenchar (2009), it is currently viewed from a masculine communicative perspective of argument and counterargument. Moreover, given the success that activists have had in communicating about emotional and gendered issues online, and through alternative forms such as art, organizations need to reconsider the ways in which dialogue around issues like sexual assault should occur.

For university communicators across the country, the inability to effectively communicate about and engage in dialogue about issues of sexual assault with their student publics has become a serious public relations problem. As the literature review has detailed, an engagement approach to issues management focuses on the convergence between organizational and public interest. By considering how to engage at the places where these interests converge, university publics and officials can work together to create a culture change on campuses. The next section provides additional context for the issue of campus sexual assault, which will be the primary focus of this study. While the context of this study is to be sexual assault, the larger theoretical contribution of this project will work towards creating a framework for communicating about other issues with salient gendered and emotional components, such as wage equality, cyberbullying, transgender rights, among other contemporary social issues with an emotional or gendered bent.

Campus Sexual Assault

While the recent push by both activists and governmental actors to address the issue of sexual assault on college campuses has received extensive media coverage (Tam, 2014), activism and calls for action surrounding sexual assault on college campuses and the broader anti-rape movement largely began in the 1960s and 1970s (Whittier, 1995). Violence against women was a fundamental issue for the feminist movement that began in the late 1960s and became the focus

of the parallel anti-rape movement (Matthews, 1994). While the anti-rape movement "has had a profound impact on our society," it has been "all but invisible as a movement, to the broader public" (Matthews, 1994, p. xi). The anti-rape movement remained largely anti-state because of its roots in leftist counter culture and violations of rape victims by the police and criminal justice system (Matthews, 1994).

College campuses have been a site of activism surrounding anti-rape since the 1970s (Bevacqua, 2000). Anti-rape activism and women's liberation organizing succeeded at university settings because of strong communication networks, availability of students, and the increasing presence of women's centers and women's studies programs (Bevacqua, 2000). However, college populations are also largely transient, frequently unavailable over breaks, and homogenous as activists are predominantly white and middle to upper class (Bevacqua, 2000). Overall, though, "campus communities not only proved an important source of activists for feminist groups, but existing interuniversity student organizations also offered communications networks to spread the word about the anti-rape movement" (Bevacqua, 2000, p. 48).

Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, student anti-rape groups emerged at universities across the country (Bevacqua, 2000). One of the first steps for such groups was to "reveal to women the reality of campus acquaintance rape" (Bevacqua, 2000, p. 165) through speak-outs and take back the night marches. Empirically gathered data to support the validation of rape as a serious offense also emerged (Bevacqua, 2000). In 1987, Mary Koss, Christine Gidycz, and Nadine Wisniewski published the first national study on rape. It is this study that included the "one in four" statistic regarding the prevalence of rape among colleague students, coined the terms "date rape" and "acquaintance rape," and developed a method for measuring rape. Although this study has been subjected to criticism, it helped to provide further legitimacy

to ongoing activism and helped to further legislation geared towards protecting women against violence.

Media coverage of campus sexual assault, testimony at Congressional hearings, and campus advocacy groups have shaped and continue to shape legislative responses to campus crime (Fisher, Hartman, Cullen, & Turner, 2002; Sloan & Fisher, 2011). As a response to past activism, laws that criminalize sexual assault and inequalities experienced as a result of gender exist, which dictate some of the actions issues managers must take. Issues managers must contend with environmental constraints, which shapes the response to certain issues (Heath & Palenchar, 2009). The two primary pieces of legislation governing how college campuses handle sexual assault are the Clery Act and Title IX. While it is not possible to go into each piece of legislation in extreme depth, a brief overview of the genesis of each is provided, as well as key provisions of the legislation in order to understand the legal requirements of issues managers, as well as the legal rights of university publics.

Clery Act. The impetus for campus safety legislation occurred in 1986 when 19-year-old college freshman Jeanne Clery was raped and murdered by a fellow student in her campus residence hall at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA (Clery Center for Security on Campus, 2012). After extensive lobbying efforts by the Clery family in the aftermath of this tragedy, Congress approved the *Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act of 1990*. In 1998 this was renamed to the *Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act* (henceforth known as the Clery Act) to honor the memory of Jeanne Clery. According to advocates of this law, the Clery Act is intended to increase awareness and discussion of crime on campus for current and prospective students and parents (Kiss, 2013; Sloan & Fisher, 2011).

The initial focus of the Clery Act was distributing an annual report detailing crime statistics and reporting policies at postsecondary institutions participating in federal student aid programs. Over the past 25 years, through amendments and changes to federal regulation, the law has evolved "into a complex and far more expansive piece of legislation with increasingly detailed reporting, programming, and procedural requirements" (Fisher & Sloan, 2013, p. 9). The Clery Act now requires all institutions of higher education that participate in federal student aid programs to: (1) report three years' worth of campus crime statistics; (2) publish an annual crime report and post security policies; and (3) make timely warnings to students and campus employees regarding serious and ongoing threats (Mawdsley, 2010).

Compliance with the Clery Act is overseen by the Department of Education, with universities incurring financial penalties for violations. All postsecondary institutions, both public and private, that participate in federal Title IV student aid programs are required to comply with the Clery Act regulations (Kiss, 2013). Although working in collaboration with other agencies, such as the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Clery Act is legally aligned with the Department of Education because of the connection to student aid programs. An inherent problem with the Clery reporting system is that only offenses brought to law enforcement are included, making statistics on sexual offenses misleading as only 5% of such crimes are ever reported (Fisher et al., 2013). While complex, "one of the most unsettled aspects of…postsecondary civil liability for on-campus victimizations is the lack of a clearly articulated duty that schools may have to students" (Fisher & Sloan, 2013, p. 8).

In 2014, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act amended the Clery Act to grant additional rights to campus victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking (Clery Center, 2015). Effective July 1, 2015, institutions were required to have updated policies

and procedures, including for the new crimes indicated. Additionally, universities are now required to maintain documentation substantiating crime statistics and report contact information for the lead Title IX coordinator (Clery Center, 2015). On July 22, 2015, the Department of Education issued a Dear Colleague Letter overviewing these final regulations to the Clery Act (Clery Center, 2015).

Title IX. Title IX is federal legislation passed in 1972 that requires gender equity in every educational program that receives federal programming (Bolger, n. d.). Of particular relevance to this study is Title IX's focus on addressing sexual harassment, gender-based discrimination, and sexual violence (Bolger, n. d.). This law does not apply only to female students, which is important for not conflating gender with sex in this dissertation project. One of the primary requirements for Title IX is that schools must be proactive in ensuring that campuses are free of sex discrimination (Bolger, n.d.). Furthermore, every university receiving federal funding is required by law to have a Title IX coordinator. Currently, 124 universities are under investigation by the Department of Education due to concerns with how sexual assault is handled on campus, specifically related to Title IX violations (Kingkade, 2015).

In addition to external environmental factors, such as legal requirements, that influence issues management, there are also internal environmental considerations. In particular, the organizational structure of universities may have an impact on how issues like sexual assault are handled. During the twentieth century, college and universities began to develop complex administrative structures based the example set by businesses and corporations (Kezar & Lester, 2009). This resulted in increasingly vertical organizations reflecting a command-and-control leadership, standardized policies and procedures, and a focus on ensuring uniformity of activities which encourages information sharing up the chain of command but not across the organization

(Schroeder, 1999a, 199b; Thompson, 1965). Furthermore, “bureaucratic structures also limit the flow of information to only the relevant group within the specific silos or areas of work,” (Kezar & Lester, 2009, p. 30). For survivors of sexual assault, siloed organizations can be detrimental as it typically takes more time to resolve a problem, individuals may be sent to multiple locations, and it is more likely that there will be an incomplete or inaccurate resolution (Kezar & Lester, 2009).

Organizations benefit from creating an inclusive environment as it increases job satisfaction (Mor Barak, 2005) and extends the commitment to the organization (Mor Barak & Levin, 2001). Although definitions vary, organizational inclusion has been understood as “the degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness” (Shore et al., 2011, p. 1265) and may occur at five distinct levels: peer group; work group; supervisor; higher management; organization-wide (Mor Barak, 2000; Shore et al., 2011). Peer groups are those that consider themselves similar in some way, such as age, gender, race, or position within the organization (Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998). Peer bonds have a positive impact on commitment to the organization (Evan, 1963; Tsui, Egan, & O’Reilly, 1992). Work groups are teams to which volunteers or employees are assigned (Shore et al., 2011). Increased interdependence among work groups leads to increased productivity and satisfaction (Campion, Medsker, & Higgs, 1993). The inclusivity created by one’s immediate supervisor plays an important role in increasing employee and volunteer trust (Therkelsen & Fiebich, 2004). Supervisor inclusion also leads to greater satisfaction with the organization (Bortree & Waters 2008). Upper-level management play an important role in effective organizational inclusion (Bortree & Waters, 2014). Individuals experience a greater level of commitment to the

organization when upper-level management is inclusive (Bortree & Waters, 2014). Finally, apart from specific hierarchical levels of inclusion, there is also an organization-wide dimension that reflects the inclusion felt by individuals with the organization (Mor-Barak & Cherin, 1998). Organization-wide inclusion can include the degree to which individuals feel invited to organization-wide activities and feel like they receive critical information about the direction and goals for the organization (Bortree & Waters, 2014). Inclusion focuses on the degree to which individuals feel part of the organization's critical processes (Miller, 1998; Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998). Put another way, "inclusion represents a person's ability to contribute fully and effectively to an organization" (Roberson, 2006, p. 215). Like other types of organizations, institutions of higher education have been impacted by societal transformations, pressure from funding programs, rising costs of administering social services, changing legal regulations, and information availability (Kazeroony, 2013). In order to address these ongoing challenges, many campuses are rethinking their organizational structures to focus more on collaboration as partnerships help to combine resources and combine expertise to find new solutions to problems (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Stein & Short, 2001). Collaborative partnerships focus on an interactive process, with relationships developed over time and the development of shared rules, norms, and structures (Kezar & Lester, 2009).

The benefits to collaborative organizational structures include encouraging greater interaction, information sharing, communication, and collective problem solution that results in more innovation and learning (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Furthermore, collaborative efforts allow for greater representation of expertise (functional area) and background (gender, race, social class) that allows for different perspectives to develop a more complex and complete picture of challenges and possible solutions (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Denison, Hart, & Kahn, 1996;

Neumann & Wright, 1999). Additionally, because of greater information sharing and open communication, different units can better serve individuals by helping them know what office to be directed to in order to resolve a problem. This creates overall greater efficiency and effectiveness across the institution (Kezlar & Lester, 2009). In addition to more efficiently offering services, collaborative efforts also result in the broadening to governance to new groups on campus, providing greater diversity of input into organizational policies and decision making (Kuh, 2006; Kuh et al., 2005). With a greater focus on collaboration, universities are internally adapting to new legal requirements and societal pressure to address the issue of sexual assault on campuses.

Research Questions

Nearly one in five women will be sexually assaulted during their time on campus (Krebs et al., 2009). At the time of this writing, 124 universities are under investigation by the Department of Education due to concerns with how sexual assault is handled on campus (Kingkade, 2015). Although universities have been confronted with issues of sexual assault for decades, communicating about and ensuring compliance with the laws surrounding sexual assault continue to be an ongoing challenge. Clearly, universities have been unable to successfully manage this issue, heightening the need to reexamine these issues both in theory and practice.

For these reasons, the purpose of this project is to propose an extended engagement approach to issues management that explores the gendered and emotional aspects of issues to understand what makes issues like sexual assault so difficult to address. By offering a revised theory of issues management based on dialogue and engagement, this project will have

applicability beyond the context of universities to assist different types of organizations in communicating about gendered and emotional issues. Additionally, development of this revised theory will better inform communicators how to develop more proactive communication strategies for handling issues like sexual assault. While no issue is generalizable, this project will work to tease out implications for other gendered and emotional issues, such as maternity leave, and LGBT rights, and even race-related issues.

As the literature highlighted, issues themselves are a social and rhetorical construction. Communication plays a vital role in the construction of issues, identification, and shared meaning making "as people analyze, define, delimit, and label problems" (Hallahan, 2001, p. 28). Defining issues is not only of external importance to organizations, but also internally as it is easy for disparate parts of an organization or various publics to perceive issues differently (Jaques, 2004).

In particular, this dissertation will examine if and how issues like sexual assault are constructed as gendered and emotional by issues managers and student publics. One of the main contributions of this dissertation is to interrogate ways in which gender and emotion are currently absent from issues management theory, and to integrate them into a new engagement model of issues management practice. In order to understand why this gap exists, it is important to know how university issues managers understand the relationship between gender and emotion as it relates to sexual assault. This will offer insights into how a normative theoretical model of issues management can account for these issues. Understanding the student perception of these issues as well is necessary for understanding the best way to communicate about these dimensions of gendered issues like sexual assault. Although this project will focus primarily on the gendered and emotional dimensions of issues, the following broader research questions are posed in order

to allow for a more holistic picture of how issues are rhetorically constructed and how gender and emotion interrelate with other dimensions. With this in mind, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1a: How, if at all, is sexual assault rhetorically constructed as an issue by university issue managers?

RQ1b: How, if at all, is sexual assault rhetorically constructed as an issue by university student publics?

While the first research question addresses issues, the second research question interrogates the management side of issues management. Lauzen and Dozier (1994) highlighted that issues management is not so much about issues but about how organizations manage their action and reactions in relation to an external stimulus. Similarly, Grunig and Repper (1992) argued that strategic management involves balancing the mission of the organization with what the environment will allow it to do. Therefore, the environment within which issues managers must work involves both internal and external constraints. For this study, internal constraints are focused on the degree to which issues managers communicate with other departments that handle issue of sexual assault to better the internal organizational dynamics of issues management.

Additionally, it is necessary to understand what external constraints issues managers must contend with in how to communicate issues. As mentioned previously, because of past activism on issues of sexual assault, two primary laws exist that govern how college campuses handle sexual assault: the Clery Act and Title IX. Issues managers must contend with such external legal constraints, which shape the response to certain issues (Heath & Palenchar, 2009). In order to understand how the legal requirements surrounding sexual assault, as well as the legal rights of

university publics, affect issues management, the external constraints faced by issues managers will also be explored.

The second research question therefore seeks to understand how both internal and external constraints shape how issues of sexual assault are managed:

RQ2a: How, if at all, do internal organizational constraints affect how university issues managers approach the management of sexual assault?

RQ2b: How, if at all, do external legal constraints affect how university issues managers approach the management of sexual assault?

Issues management focuses on the dialogue between organizations and publics that allows for the creation of zones of meaning to bridge differences (Heath & Palenchar, 2009). Kent and Taylor (2002) offered a framework for dialogue that focused on mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk, and commitment. This focus on empathy makes Kent and Taylor's (2002) view of dialogue a useful concept for exploring issues that are highly sensitive, emotional, and gendered in public relations. In extending the engagement approach to issues management, this conceptualization of dialogue places the emphasis on the relationship between organizations and publics, allowing for more interpersonal approaches to discussing and integrating issues that do not fit into the rational paradigm. Additionally, social media may offer additional opportunities for creating dialogue around issues that have traditionally been silenced. Through understanding both an organizational perspective on dialogue about issues of sexual assault and a student perspective, areas of current and potential zones of meaning can be explored:

RQ3a: How, if at all, do university issues managers engage in dialogue with university student publics and each other surrounding issues of sexual assault?

RQ3b: How, if at all, do university student publics engage in dialogue with university issues managers and each other surrounding issues of sexual assault?

RQ3c: How, if at all, is social media being used to engage in dialogue surrounding issues of sexual assault?

However, dialogue is difficult to implement in practice because there is no clear guidance for what constitutes dialogue (Theunissen & Wan Noordin, 2012). In addition to the definitional issues surrounding dialogue, it also requires willingness by organizations to give up some control. Organizations cannot only be willing to engage in dialogue but must also understand the nature of dialogue in order to relinquish control and allow publics to communicate openly and honestly (Theunissen & Wan Noordin, 2012). Giving up control is inherently risky and is not associated with achieving predetermined objectives, which makes it difficult to align with much modern public relations planning. With these challenges in mind, the following research questions are posed:

RQ4a: What, if any, obstacles do university issues managers face in engaging in dialogue with university student publics and each other surrounding issues of sexual assault?

RQ4b: What, if any, obstacles do university student publics face in engaging in dialogue with university issues managers and each other surrounding issues of sexual assault?

In determining what obstacles exist to issues management, it is important to know how, if at all, success if being formally evaluated by issuers managers. As discussed in the issues management models reviewed at the beginning of this chapter (e.g., Crable & Vibbert, 1985; Jones & Chase, 1979), evaluation is a key step in the process. This is particularly important as

many federal grants that universities participate in require some sort of evaluation component in order to receive continued monetary support for programs. However, given that evaluation is often underutilized due to lack of time, money, knowledge of evaluation techniques, and priority (e.g., Baskinet al., 2010; Hon, 1998; Macnamara, 2006; Xavier et al., 2006; White, 2005), it will be necessary to explore how evaluation is occurring at universities. With this in mind, the following research questions are posed:

RQ5a: How, if at all, do university issues managers evaluate their communication efforts surrounding sexual assault?

RQ5b: How, if at all, do university student publics evaluate their communication efforts surrounding sexual assault?

At its core, this project proposes an extended engagement approach to issues management that explores the gendered and emotional aspects of issues to understand what makes issues like sexual assault so difficult to address. Because an engagement approach recognizes the importance of the relationship between organizations and publics, the ways in which university issues managers and university student publics construct sexual assault as an issue will be explored. Secondly, issues management research has focused on the management perspective that recognizes the importance of strategy to handling issues. Therefore, the second research question will work to understand the internal and external forces that affect the ability to manage issues. Given the focus on active dialogue in an engagement approach to issues management, the next two research questions will explore the ways in which university issues managers and university student publics attempt to engage with dialogue, and the obstacles faced in enacting dialogue. Finally, the last research question focus on how success is evaluated by

issues managers and university student publics in educating university populations about and decreasing the prevalence of sexual assault on campuses.

Having posed the research questions to guide this study, the next chapter will focus on the methods for answering these questions.

Chapter 3—Methods

As illustrated in the previous chapter, issues management, as currently conceptualized, lacks the ability to adequately consider issues such as sexual assault, which have prominent gendered and emotional dimensions. The main purpose of this study is to offer an engagement approach to issues management that allows for the inclusion of gendered and emotional issues, which will not only extend theory in this area but also offers practitioners a tool for developing better informed communications surrounding sexual assault at universities and other institutions.

The qualitative methods used in this research included a triangulation of data gathering techniques through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. These methods helped answer the questions of how social actors at universities come to understand issues such as sexual assault, articulate their role in handling these issues on campus, interpret how these issues are handled, interrogate the emotional and gendered dimensions of these issues, and discuss the opportunities and challenges to creating a sustained dialogue on campuses about these issues. This chapter will first address the feminist research ethic guiding this study, followed by the interpretivist methodology that is being utilized for data collection and analysis. Next, each specific data collection method is described both in terms of its general utility in research and then more specifically to the context of this dissertation project. After each method is explained, I discuss how study participants were recruited and provide an overview of the participants. Following that, I describe the data analysis procedures followed. Finally, I discuss how emotional reflexivity played a key role in this project.

Methodology

Methodology can be thought of as the strategy behind the choice of particular research methods (Crotty, 1998). Qualitative research can be categorized into three methodological

approaches: (1) post-positivist, (2) interpretive, and (3) critical (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Post-positivism operates under the assumption that there is an objective reality that involves cause-and-effect relationships (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Alternatively, interpretive approaches operate under the assumption that meaning is socially constructed through interaction, and the only way to understand social reality is from the point of view of those enmeshed in it (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Finally, critical approaches focus on the "power-laden context" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 20) in which we live. Critical approaches also work to reject and challenge binary categories, such as male-female, which can both oppose two groups as well as imply a sameness among all members (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

This research project locates itself at the intersection of the interpretivist and critical paradigms. The interpretivist paradigm recognizes the need to understand "social action from the actors' point of view" in order to ascertain meaning and to gain "empathetic insight into others' attitudes" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 31). Through an interpretive approach, this study sought to understand how communication surrounding sexual assault on college campuses occurs from the perspective of those tasked with communicating about these issues. This study included talking with relevant administrators at university campuses, such as Title IX coordinators, student conduct officials, and victim services offices, to understand their current meaning making of sexual assault as an issue on their campuses. Furthermore, students were also consulted as primary recipients of messages surrounding sexual assault on college campuses to understand how they make meaning of this as an issue and feel the university interacts with them.

However, an interpretivist approach does not come without limitations. How people come to understand the world is "structured historically in the traditions, prejudices and institutional practices that come down to us" (Taylor, 1993, p. 59). As interpretive research often

neglects the external structural elements that influence and shape behavior (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007), an important part of this project was to integrate ways in which certain external structures, such as the law, play into this meaning making practice for participants. Given that a core focus of this study was to recognize gender and emotion as necessary aspects of issues management, a critical approach was vital to be interrogate underlying assumptions and reasons why certain topics were or were not brought up in interviews. This is not meant to imply that the researcher has special knowledge over participants, but the researcher is in a unique position to critically consider the underlying systems that might lead to certain responses.

A critical approach was also utilized when analyzing data to look for ways in which participants may not be aware of the way ideology and other invisible forms of power guide their actions. Therefore, in addition to simply offering a description of how issues of sexual assault are currently communicated about, another purpose of this project was to critique current practices in order to offer suggestions for how they can be improved and the degree to which considering emotion and gender within the issues management framework can provide a model for this.

In line with a critical approach, I was guided by a feminist research ethic, which "offers researchers feminist standards for assessing research despite feminism's multiplicity and its defiance of attempts to delimit its practice" (Ackerly & True, 2010, p. 21). A feminist research ethic is a commitment by the researcher to continuously reflect upon how research is conducted and knowledge is created, with a particular eye to exploring absence, silence, difference, and oppression (Ackerly & True, 2010). There are four primary areas that a feminist research ethic attends to: (1) the power of epistemology; (2) boundaries; (3) relationships; and (4) the situatedness of the researcher (Ackerly & True, 2010).

Power of epistemology. An epistemology is a belief system about what constitutes knowledge, evidence, and convincing arguments, as well as who can be a knower (Ackerly & True, 2010; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). A feminist research ethic is a commitment to noticing the power of epistemology – particularly those that are privileged (Ackerly & True, 2010). Furthermore, it is a commitment to reviewing and challenging conceptualizations of what are appropriate ways of understanding the world (Ackerly & True, 2010).

Boundaries. A feminist research ethic requires a commitment to being attentive to boundaries created by our research questions and those created by our disciplines (Ackerly & True, 2010). While there are certainly many valid reasons for boundaries to be created within the research process, it is necessary to be attentive to their ability to exclude voices or limit our imagination during the research process (Ackerly & True, 2010).

Relationships. By following a feminist research ethic, researchers are concerned with the interrelatedness of social, political, and economic interactions actions with the lives of others (Ackerly & True, 2010). It is also necessary to be attentive to relationships of power between researchers and participants, as well as the potential for the research process to disrupt the context and relationships of participants (Ackerly & True, 2010).

Situatedness of the researcher. Finally, a feminist research ethic encourages the researcher to situate herself within the three previous power dynamics of epistemology, boundaries, and relationships (Ackerly & True, 2010). In that spirit, this study located itself within a feminist epistemology and worked to break down methodological boundaries in combining interpretivist and critical approaches. Additionally, the research methods recognized the different relationships that existed between participants and the researcher.

With the underpinning heuristic of the feminist research ethic put forth, in the remaining sections I explain the specific research methods chosen to answer my research questions.

Methods

For this study I utilized in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation to develop converging lines of inquiry. Each of these data collection methods is discussed more in-depth in the following sections.

In-depth interviews. This study utilized in-depth interviews with university officials around the United States responsible for communicating about issues of sexual assault, including Title IX officers, victims advocate services, student affairs, and university communications. Berg (2009) defined interviewing as "a conversation with a purpose" (p. 101). Semi-structured interviews were conducted, meaning that questions will be asked in a systematic way, but there was freedom to explore questions beyond the initial protocol (Berg, 2009). While time consuming, interviews are utilized when "depth, detail, and richness" are sought (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 13), and it is up to the interviewer to ensure that appropriate main questions, probes, and follow-ups are used to achieve this thick description (Geertz, 1973).

Rubin and Rubin (2005) discussed three characteristics of qualitative interviews: (1) they build on a naturalistic, interpretive philosophy; (2) they are extensions of ordinary conversations; and (3) interviewees are partners in the research instead of subjects. Interviews allow the participants to frame and structure their responses, meaning researchers explore the topic from the interviewee's perspective. However, it is important to remember that it is the researcher who defines the purpose for the conversation to occur and recruit people who can contribute to that conversation (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Through interviews with university communicators and officials responsible for managing one or multiple aspects of sexual assault on their campuses, I sought to understand how they understand sexual assault as an issue on their campuses, how they view the management of this (and related) issues, the extent to which the gendered and emotional dimensions of the issue are taken into account, and the obstacles and opportunities that exist for creating dialogue with students.

Although many universities have standard responses that are in line with official university policies and legal requirements, interviewing the widest variety of people involved in some aspect of managing and addressing issues of sexual assault on their campus was important to obtain a holistic perspective. Given the social construction of issues, it is easy for diverse parts of an organization or various publics to perceive issues differently (Jaques, 2004). For example, Title IX offices may view issues in legal terms, public safety officials may focus on broader implications for community safety, gender equity offices are concerned with issues of inclusion, and financial offices are likely concerned with the economic impact. One challenge communicators face in an academic setting is a tradition of operating within silos that keep information from being shared (Hawkins & Frohoff, 2010). Because sexual assault is so legally arbitrated, the lack of communication between various issues managers on campus may limit the ability to effectively engage the varied dimensions of the issue, particularly the gendered and emotional components.

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) wrote that "[q]ualitative interviewing is predicated on the idea that interview talk is the rhetoric of socially situated speakers" (p. 172). Therefore, the data from interviews is the rhetorical construction of the participants' experiences (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). For example, because of the nature of the job responsibility, a victim advocate service

office staff member may have a different perspective on the issue than a public safety official first responder. The legal responsibility that each job holds is different, which also makes it necessary to interview a variety of officials at each university.

Focus groups. Because issues management focuses on the convergence between organizational interests and public interests, six focus groups were conducted with university students to understand how well they believe the university engages with them on these issues. Due to the logistical feasibility of recruiting focus group participants, focus groups took place at the University of Maryland. However, this was not necessarily a limitation as the purpose of qualitative research is to gain a depth of understanding rather than strive for generalizability (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

The focus group approach allows researchers to learn about "conscious, semiconscious, and unconscious psychological and sociocultural characteristics and processes among various groups" (Berg, 2009, p. 158). Morgan (1988) wrote that the hallmark of focus groups is "the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group" (p. 12). The idea behind this method is to create a dynamic interaction amongst the participants that stimulates discussion based on each other's comments and insights (Berg, 2009). Focus groups can be used as "self-contained data" (Morgan & Spanish, 1984, p. 263), meaning the focus groups can be used as stand-alone data, or they can be used as an additional line of action for a study to offer corroboration or disagreement with other data collected (Berg, 2009). Focus groups serve as a valuable way to gain a collectivist view about an issue. A typical focus group set-up involves a small number of participants (6-12) led by a moderator who ensures the discussion stays focused to the research objectives (Berg, 2009).

Focus groups are advantageous because they can allow the researcher to gather large amounts of data in relatively short periods of time. Additionally, focus groups also provide an understanding of how members of a public arrive at or change their conclusions based on interactions with other participants (Berg, 2009). There are also disadvantages to focus groups, including the variability of the group as a result of voluntary participation, social desirability factors, and the possibility of dominant personalities overpowering less dominant voices (Berg, 2009).

Participant observation. As defined by DeWalt and DeWalt (2002), participant observation is a method "in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture" (p. 1). Spradley (1980) wrote that "explicit culture makes up part of what we know, a level of knowledge people can communicate about with relative ease" (p. 7). In contrast, tacit aspects of culture remain outside of awareness or consciousness for a group (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Because of this, participant observation is important because in some situations people may not be aware of or able to articulate their experiences with the phenomenon being studied (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Participant observation occurs in naturalistic settings and lies on a continuum between pure participation and pure observation (Bernard, 1995; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). The approach to participant observation in this study is best described by active participation, where the researcher engages in almost everything the group does as a way to learn the cultural rules and behaviors (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002).

Because participant observation operates within a continuum, qualitative researchers to continually balance the space between being an insider and outsider in their research. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) wrote:

> The qualitative researcher's perspective is perhaps a paradoxical one: it is to be acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others—to indwell—and at the same time to be aware of how one's own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand (p. 123).

I was actively constituted as an insider within the outreach group population for this study, a subgroup of the larger organization (Kanuha, 2000). As an insider, I shared an identity, language, and experience with the participants (Asselin, 2003).

There are both benefits and drawbacks to adopting this perspective. Some of the benefits included more rapid and complete acceptance by participants, as well as access to more intimate exchanges that further shaped understandings of the research project (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). However, there are also drawbacks for adopting an insider research perspective. It is not uncommon that a researcher's perceptions are clouded by her own experiences with the group (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Furthermore, participants may make assumptions about similarity with the researcher and fail to explain experiences fully (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Researchers must also struggle with their role conflict and loyalties to the group, as well as to research practices (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007).

For this study, embedding in a university-sponsored peer outreach group provided an opportunity to dig deeper into the convergence of organizational interests and public interests. This was a prime example of one way in which dialogue around issues of sexual assault was facilitated with and by students at the university, which helped to provide further insights into the

fourth research question of this study. Furthermore, sustained involvement with a subset of student publics also provided more opportunities to engage more deeply on the gendered and emotional dimensions of these issues that a one-hour focus group could not accomplish.

Participants

Recruitment. I used purposive and snowball sampling to recruit participants for in-depth individual interviews (Berg, 2009). I began by contacting individuals in issues management positions at the University of Maryland in order to understand how the issue is handled at my home institution. I began the search for issues managers at different universities, beginning with Big 10 schools, then moving to Big 12 schools, ACC schools, SEC schools, and the Pac-12 in order to gain a regional diversity. I searched for the Title IX coordinators at each institution, as well as sexual prevention educators. After reaching out to these key informants, I inquired as to who would be the most appropriate person to speak with at their school regarding issues surrounding communication and sexual assault. Many times the person contacted felt that they would be the most appropriate person to speak with and would sometimes direct me to their colleagues. A few participants also recommended contacts at different institutions who they knew from professional connections.

Since participation for in-depth interviews was not limited to a specific geographic region, a combination of telephone, Skype, and face-to-face interviews were utilized based on the location of the issues managers. While telephone and Skype were necessary to overcome geographic boundaries, there are limitations to conducting interviews via these channels. Particularly for telephone interviews, the lack of visual cues can make it difficult to determine when questions are sensitive, when to back off, or when to keep going (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Additionally, utilizing telephone interviews and Skype interviews creates greater opportunity for

distraction on the part of both researchers and participants, who may not be giving the interview their full attention (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

In recruiting participants for in-depth interviews, I sent out emails to contacts describing the purpose of the project and attaching a scanned copy of the IRB-approved consent form. Interested participants then emailed me back if they consented to the terms of the study and a time was set for an in-person, telephone, or Skype interview. Twenty-six interviews were conducted via telephone, five interviews were conducted in-person, and one interview was conducted via Skype.

For the focus groups, recruitment occurred from already existing groups (an upper-level seminar course for communication majors and the executive leadership of a newly formed sexual assault prevention club on campus), as well as through SONA, a Department of Communication participant pool, to recruit undergraduate participants at the University of Maryland. Participants in the focus groups were given consent forms prior to participating in the focus groups. Five of the focus groups were conducted in conference rooms located in the Department of Communication at the University of Maryland. The focus group with the sexual assault prevention group took place off-site at the president of the organization's home. All interview and focus group participants agreed to be audio-recorded for the purposes of this study.

The third type of qualitative data collection I utilized for this study was participation observation with the University of Maryland's peer outreach group for Campus Advocates Respond and Educate to Stop Violence (CARE). The three specific areas of focus for CARE include sexual violence, relationship violence, and stalking. CARE's peer outreach team facilitates presentations and workshops and participate in a variety of outreach events on campus to raise awareness of this campus resource. Additionally, CARE peer advocates work with

survivors to provide support, resources, and referrals. Undergraduate peer educators must apply to participate for this program, and commitment to involvement for two-semesters. I attended the mandatory training for peer educators, which will be from August 24-28, 2015 at the University of Maryland. Additionally, I attended the twice a week, hour-long meetings for the Fall 2015 semester in which that outreach team was required to participate, as well as the events planned outside of those hours.

To gain access to this research site, I reached out to the director of CARE in spring 2015 to ask about the possibility of working with their group during the fall 2015 semester. During this time, I learned of a new outreach team being formed to focus on helping to communicate about issues of sexual assault to the university community. This outreach team consisted of four undergraduate students, the director of CARE, and myself. One student dropped out the first week of the semester. I participated in meetings two times a week (one hour) and attended all events organized and assisted by the outreach team (including participating on a discussion panel about domestic violence).

Summary of participants. A total of 32 issues managers were interviewed representing 21 different universities across the United States (see Appendix A and Appendix B). To further break this down, 16 of the participants were affiliated with the women's center on their campus, or an equivalent office such as gender violence prevention. Representative titles for participants in these positions included violence prevention education coordinator and director of gender violence and social change. The remaining participants included eight Title IX officials (at some institutions called student conduct specialists), six deans of students, one vice provost, and one faculty member. Of the 21 participating institutions, 10 were on the Department of Education's list for Title IX investigations at the time of the interview. In order to retain the anonymity for

the participating institutions and university issues managers, no identifying information will be provided for the schools. However, to provide a general overview, 17 of the institutions were public and 4 were private. Interviews ranged in length from 32 minutes to 93 minutes, with the average length of interviews being 49 minutes. Interviews were conducted from July through December 2015.

In total, six focus groups were conducted for this project, with an additional five in-depth interviews conducted with highly involved students in one university's peer education program because a focus group with them was not feasible due to scheduling conflicts (see Appendix C). Overall, 32 undergraduate students participated in focus groups, including 13 freshmen, four sophomores, four juniors, and 11 seniors.

The first focus group was with the already existing upper-level communication seminar class. Participants for this focus group were recruited through a colleague who offered her class period as a space to conduct this research. This particular focus group included 8 participants (7 seniors, 1 junior) and consisted of four males and four females. This focus group lasted 61 minutes.

The second focus group occurred with the executive leadership team of the newly formed sexual assault prevention student organization at one of the institutions. I found out about this group after attending an on-campus screening of *The Hunting Ground* hosted by the Panhellenic Association on campus and emailed the president of the group. She immediately agreed to let me attend their regularly scheduled weekly leadership meeting and conduct a focus group. In total, five executives attended, which included four seniors and one junior. This focus group lasted 53 minutes.

The remaining four focus groups were recruited through the SONA system at my university. For each focus group, eight spots were opened and filled by participants. However, in each focus group not all registered participants showed up. The third focus group was attended by four freshmen. All participants were female. This focus group session lasted 60 minutes. The fourth focus group was attended by three freshmen, one sophomore, and one junior. Four of the participants were female and one was male. This focus group lasted 61 minutes. The fifth focus group was attended three freshmen. Two were female and one was male. This focus group lasted 52 minutes. Finally, the sixth focus group was attended by three freshmen, three sophomores, and one junior. Five participants were female and two were male. This focus group lasted 50 minutes.

Time spent conducting participant observation for this study was approximately 92 hours. Participant observation included three meetings with CARE staff over the summer, attending a meeting between CARE, Title IX, and university communication, 16 hours at a regional Title IX conference held at UMD, attending the 40-hour CARE orientation, 27 hours of in-class meetings, and six hours attending and participating in the CARE Grand Opening celebration, domestic violence awareness month panel, and a tabling event prior to a screening of *The Hunting Ground.* In total, I gathered 80 pages of field notes from participant observation throughout the duration of the study.

Traditional views of qualitative methods for research suggest that researchers should strive to attain a saturation point when collecting data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, Corbin and Strauss (2008) argued that it is impossible to attain total saturation. Therefore, they argue that sufficient sampling has occurred when major categories “show depth and variation in terms of their development” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 149). When each category attains a

considerable breadth and depth the researcher can say sufficient sampling has occurred. While collecting data for this study, at a certain point answers were becoming similar and consistent and no new information was being obtained that significantly changed the emerging themes. When this breadth and depth to themes had been obtained, I decided sufficient sampling had occurred for this study.

Procedures

Interview protocol. Interview protocols are important to help guide the researcher to ensure main questions are addressed and provide a proposed structure for the interview, but they are flexible enough to allow for the researcher to explore different questions and themes depending on each participant. Rubin and Rubin (2005) describe such a protocol as "a free-hand map to the conversation, pointing out the general direction but not specifying which nooks and crannies will be explored" (p. 150). Probes have been incorporated into the interview protocol because of the realization that some participants had less to say on certain topics than others, and this will provide a way to draw out more information on certain subjects if necessary (Berg, 2009).

The interview questions for this study derive directly from the research questions, which were directly informed by the literature review for this study. For example, RQ1 for this study asked, *How, if at all, is sexual assault constructed as an issue by university issue managers?* To get at this research question in the interview protocol, the following question were posed to interviewees: *How do you define sexual assault?; How does your university define sexual assault; How is sexual assault perceived on your campus?* As another example, RQ2a asked, *How, if at all, do internal organizational constraints affect how university issues managers approach the management of sexual assault?* To get at this research question in the interview

protocol, questions included: *What plan/protocol exists at your university for handling issues of sexual assault?* and *Have you experienced any challenges communicating with other departments that handle issues of sexual assault?* These are only a few of the questions to be asked during the interview. The full interview protocol can be found in Appendix D, with the particular research question it is designed to address noted.

Focus group protocol. When conducting focus group research, it is necessary to decide the degree of standardization that will be employed for each group. Standardization refers to "the extent to which the identical questions and procedures are used in every group" (Morgan, 1996, p. 142). Because of the interpretivist and critical paradigms under which this study is located, a less standardized open-ended approach was utilized as it allows participants to more freely speak about their own experiences (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). In particular, "open-ended formats allow the group dynamic to flow, creating a unique narrative whose power does not lie in conventional conceptions of generalizability" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 180). Additionally, this open-ended approach allowed flexibility in subsequent focus group interactions to adapt and revise the focus group protocol as necessary.

Five out of the six focus groups were conducted in a conference room within the Department of Communication at the University of Maryland. The focus group with members of the sexual assault prevention group was conducted off-site at the house of one of the members as that was their typical meeting location. Each focus group began with participants reviewing the consent form and filling out basic demographic information. All participants signed the consent form and agreed to the focus groups being audio-recorded. In order to build rapport, each focus group began with introductions, as well as a brief overview of the study.

To begin the research process, though, a focus group protocol was developed. As with the interview protocol, the focus group protocol was directly tied to answer the proposed research questions, which derived directly from the literature review. For example, RQ3 asked, *How, if at all, do university student publics perceive engage in dialogue with university issues managers and each other surrounding issues of sexual assault?* The focus group protocol questions directly related to this research question asked *What communication about sexual assault have you received from the University of Maryland?* and *How do you talk about issues like sexual assault with your friends?* A complete list of focus group questions and probes can be found in Appendix E, with the research questions each was designed to address noted.

Data Analysis

Using a data analysis approach borrowed from grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and rhetorical field methods (Middleton, Senda-Cook, & Endres, 2011), I will identify themes that emerged through the data. I will first explain the grounded theory approach, then describe the contribution of rhetorical field methods to the analytical process

Using the research questions to guide analysis, the initial data were coded through constant comparative and line-by-line coding to establish emergent themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This analysis was inspired by a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), with the researcher using the qualitative research software NVivo to conduct coding on transcripts. Early scholarship surrounding computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) such as NVivo suggested the potential to turn qualitative research into a rigid automated process that would neglect the role of human interpretation and reflection (Kelle, 1995). However, subsequent scholarship has shown that qualitative research software can successfully facilitate a grounded theory investigation by managing the iterative process and helping to organize large

amounts of data (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2006; Hutchison, Johnston, & Breckon, 2010).

All 32 interview transcripts and six focus groups transcripts were uploaded, as well as the 80 pages of participant observation field notes. The researcher developed codes inductively through a first pass of an interview transcript. Codes were then programmed as nodes in the NVivo program and given a definition to ensure coding consistency through the transcripts. Throughout the process, statements and phrases in the transcripts were reflected upon, reducing the data down to a proposed theme that reflected the essence of the statement. Using an inductive process, participant comments were arranged according to patterns and themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Alternative themes were also developed, and ideas that could not be captured into themes were integrated into findings to enhance nuance and understanding (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

There is a push within rhetorical scholarship for the articulation of rhetorical field methods, which I believe are a natural fit for a study that utilized qualitative data collection methods. This created a living text that emerged from my interactions with participants and the context in which I immersed myself. I believe this empowers the researcher to see beyond surface responses of data and work to uncover hidden meaning and oppressions, which is representative of a feminist research ethic. Middleton et al. (2011) have argued for the concept of rhetorical field methods, which brings together critical rhetoric with qualitative data collection procedures, such as ethnography, participant observations, focus groups, and interviews. In combining a rhetorical approach to qualitatively derived texts, Middleton et al. (2011) argued that a fuller and living rhetoric can be created. Interview and focus group transcripts are no longer documents to be spliced through coding, but to be understood holistically and within the

context that they were created—the interaction between researcher and participant, as well as the situational and cultural contexts under which they operate. The researcher can analyze why participants may have responded certain ways, what external influences may have led to certain responses, and how these responses may tell us something about larger structural forces at play.

For this study it was important to critically examine what I was being told, especially by university officials. In particular, when interviewing campus officials, I anticipated the interviews not straying far from official university positions, which I believe need to be critically analyzed. Therefore, I crafted a lens to understand specific ways legal discourse is used to justify claims and positions. A rhetorical lens is not developed through methodological procedure but from a particular perspective. This perspective was based on ways that emotion and gender were present and absent from the research data. In line with the feminist research ethic, crafting a lens is based on the situatedness of the researcher. This insight was developed through the initial coding in order to sort through the data and rhetorically analyze the responses within each theme coded in NVivo. By incorporating a rhetorical approach into analysis, I was able to undercover meanings that did not exist at the surface level. This turn towards critical rhetoric is an important contribution to public relations scholarship. Rhetorical analysis allowed me to make judgments, as a critic, as to if the discourse from the university is in line with protecting students or protecting reputations. Using quotations from interview transcripts, I utilized a critical focus to uncover what may be underneath surface level responses in order to further develop the extended engagement approach to issues management that can incorporate gendered and emotional dimensions of issues.

The Role of Reflexivity

In qualitative research, it is recognized that the research does not live in a vacuum and comes into each study with different perceptions and possible biases. Reflexive researchers have "an ongoing conversation with [themselves]" (Berg, 2009, p. 198). Qualitative research is not simply about reporting findings as facts but instead construing interpretations of experiences and then questioning how the researcher came to those interpretations (Berg, 2009).

My interest in studying sexual assault on college campuses and developing better ways to proactively communicate and address such issues is personal. I want to ensure that no other university students are put in the situation that I was freshmen year of college when I was assaulted by someone I knew and trusted. At freshmen orientation we were provided with rape whistles, which only fed into the misconception that assaults only occur when strangers jump out of bushes (Banks, 2014). I did not know what had happened to me had a name, but I carried the embarrassment and shame with me for years. I thought what had happened to me was my fault. That somehow I had done this to myself. It wasn't. I didn't. Now, in my role as a public relations scholar and activist, I finally feel like I had a voice— a language—to talk about this issue, make change, and help others avoid the pain that has been buried inside of me for years.

As a qualitative researcher, understanding and recognizing my own bias is important for this study in order to consider the ways my own preconceptions and emotional investment may influence my analysis and interpretations of the data. In order to address this, after each interview, focus group, and weekly meetings with the peer education group, I wrote reflexive memos that address my feelings, impressions, concerns, potential themes, and areas for further inquiry in subsequence interviews and focus groups. These reflexive memos all for "a more personal account of the course of the inquiry" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998 p. 123). As this study sough to add an emotional dimension to a theory with a rational bias, I think that the inclusion of

my own emotions and personal revelations through the research project only served as an asset to this study. Because of my own experiences as a survivor of sexual assault in college, and the lack of communication I received about this issue as a student, I can capitalize on this intimate knowledge of this issue in offering a revised framework.

The first step to offering a revised model of issues management focused on the interpretivist paradigm of understanding how university issues managers and publics make meaning of the issue of sexual assault. The research questions for this study focus on understanding how issues managers and publics construct issues of sexual assault, what internal and external forces influence the ability to manage these issues, how university issues managers and publics communicate about the emotional and gendered dimensions of sexual assault, and the ways that issues managers attempt to engage in dialogue with student publics and how this is perceived.

The second step towards offering a revised model of issues management that better integrates dimensions of gender and emotions into the framework focused on a critical approach to data analysis that seeks to uncover hidden meanings within the interview and focus group texts. As an instrument of the research process, the researcher can analyze why participants may have responded certain ways, what external influences may have led to certain responses, and how these responses may tell us something about larger structural forces at play.

The purpose of this project is to both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this project will work to expand the issues management framework based on dialogue and engagement to better account for the gendered and emotional aspects of issues. As Lewin (1951) wrote, “there is nothing so practical as a good theory” (p. 1). By offering a revised theory of issues management based on dialogue and engagement, this project will have applicability beyond the context of

universities to assist different types of organizations to effectively communicating about gendered and emotional issues. Additionally, development of this revised theory will better inform communicators how to develop more proactive communication strategies for handling gendered and emotional issues in their early stages so as to avoid unnecessary attention in media and embody the ideals of "the good organization communicating well" (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p. 210) in public relations practice.

Chapter 4—Results

The following sections overview the results of this study, which were gathered from 32 in-depth interviews with university issues managers, six focus groups with student populations, and approximately 92 hours of participant observation. Each section proceeds with an overview of results for each research question, as well as detailed discussion of results from issues managers and student publics.

Rhetorically Constructing Sexual Assault as a Gendered and Emotional Issue

One of the primary concerns of this dissertation was to examine if and how issues like sexual assault are rhetorically constructed as gendered and emotional by issues managers and student publics. Exploring both perspectives was necessary to understand how, if at all, the rhetorical construction differed between each group. The ability to notice potential differences in how issues are constructed is crucial to understand the best way to manage issues. Each research question is answered separately to offer a comparison between how issues managers and students rhetorically construct issues like sexual assault.

RQ1a: How, if at all, is sexual assault rhetorically constructed as an issue by issues managers?

Constructing sexual assault as a gender-inclusive issue was seen as a way to bring both men and women into the conversation. Decoupling traditional gender binaries from sexual assault (male as perpetrator, female as victim) was also an attempt to decouple negative emotions from the issue as well. For example, taking a more gender-inclusive approach to sexual assault was designed to avoid putting men on the defensive. Additionally, rhetorically constructing sexual assault as gender-inclusive allowed for it to be seen as more than a “women’s issue.” However, there was a delicate rhetorical balance that occurred in recognizing that the vast

majority of sexual assaults are perpetrated by men towards women. Furthermore, issues managers worked to construct gendered spaces where students (particularly males) did not feel like they were being put on the defensive when engaging in discussions about these issues and could let their emotional guards down. Finally, depending on the issue manager's position within the university, sexual assault was also rhetorically constructed as a compliance issue.

Gender-inclusive issue. Institutions have historically focused on prevention efforts for female students, such as self-defense classes or offering guidelines for how to not be a victim of crime. Bethany, who began as an undergraduate student at her university, then graduate student, then full-time staff member, noted that "When we first started, we were doing a lot of this, 'Men, don't rape. Women, these are risk reducers to prevent you from being raped. Be very careful and don't walk alone. Men, keep your penis to yourself.'" However, given the more widespread media attention being paid to the issue, a common challenge for university issues managers in dealing with the gendered dimensions of sexual assault was to reframe the issue away from perpetrator (male) versus victim (female). Ashley said that "I think…the historical bias that men are going to be treated as potential perpetrators and women are going to be treated as potential victims in any conversation makes people kind of shutdown." Echoing this, Becca explained that framing the issue of sexual assault within a perpetrator and victim paradigm creates "an easy way to get [students] to tune you out and say, "Oh no, this would never happen to me," or "I would never do that to someone else, so this doesn't pertain to me. I'm just not going to listen."

Violence prevention educators across universities noted that sexual assault crosses all boundaries, including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and religion. However, the challenge in reframing the perpetrator/victim framework is because sexual assault does disproportionately affect women as the victim and men as the perpetrator. One of Becca's

main responsibilities at her university is overseeing a sexual violence prevention theater troupe run by students. In determining what types of scenarios to perform, she said “we're going to show you the skit based on the highest statistics. We are going to show you a male perpetrator, a female victim, happening at a party, using alcohol…but that's not to say the other things don't happen.” Melissa described this as “a balancing act” because the “data tells us that women are more likely to be victims of sexual violence.” She goes on to note the challenge of this:

> How do communicate the fact that, if one gender is impacted by this more than others, but it still happens to other folks, how can we be sensitive to that while also acknowledging that for a lot of our male students, and then our female students, acknowledging the fact that women are victims more often than others puts people on the defensive.

The focus of not putting men on the defensive was a prominent consideration for university issues managers. Jade highlighted that her department was “approaching men as potential allies, as people who can help make a difference in our campus culture and sexual violence that is occurring.” Becca echoed this sentiment in regards to the reactions to the skits her theater troupe performs:

> We definitely still get that defensive kind of reaction, which I think is just a gut instinct, and I understand it. That's why we try our hardest to really come at it saying, look, we're not trying to speak to potential perpetrators and potential victims. That's not our goal here. We're trying to talk to everyone about what we can do as a whole.

All participating institutions in this study were utilizing some form of bystander intervention training as a way to make the issue of sexual assault more gender-inclusive and overcome the traditional gendered dichotomy. This was seen as a more encompassing way to

empower all individuals on campus to step into situations that seem problematic. The idea behind this programming is that anybody can be an active bystander and work to stop behaviors that might lead to sexual violence on their campus. These programs were most often housed in the victims' advocacy offices or women's centers, so most of the in-depth responses about bystander intervention came from issues managers in those positions on campus. While upper-administration and Title IX offices noted that such training and communication was occurring, it was not, in general, their primary responsibility.

During my participant observation, I gave two bystander intervention trainings to undergraduate students, partnering with an undergraduate peer educator. The scenarios discussed within the training had been intentionally designed to provide gender-neutral names for the parties involved. Here is the language from one sample scenario utilized in this bystander intervention training:

> You are at a party. During the past hour you notice that your friend Chris has been talking to one of your housemates, Sam. They seem to be having a good time but it is clear that Chris has had too much to drink. At one point you overhear Sam say, "I'm just going to get Chris 'one more.'" A few minutes later you see Sam put an arm around Chris and start to lead Chris upstairs.

Students wanted to know who "the guy was and who the girl was" in this scenario. As part of the training, it was the job of the facilitator to recognize the ambiguous genders involved in this situation and push students to consider if and why knowing the genders would matter in terms of what they would do in this situation or how they would intervene. This not only raised issues of "male versus female," but also opened up a discussion about sexual assault and sexual

orientation. Gender-inclusive language surrounding bystander intervention was a key aspect. Melissa echoed this reaction by students at her university:

> In programming, we try to use gender-neutral terminology, so using terms like they instead of he, she. What we find is students, even though we're using gender-neutral terms, students are making the assumption that we're just talking about female victim and male perpetrator, so if we're not really specific about the language that they're using, the default is male, female. When we're talking about this, we alternate he, she, they, and place victims, in place of perpetrators, in place of bystanders.

In constructing sexual assault as more gender-inclusive, who the message is coming from matters. If the message source identifies as, or is perceived as female, then many people categorize issues like sexual assault as "a women's issue." Results from this study indicate that this is still broadly perceived as a feminine "women's issue" even though issues managers are making a concerted effort to use gender-inclusive language Ashley noted that "people often respond, especially male students, and actually female students as well, respond more favorably to men who are talking about sexual violence in terms of this population." Bethany, who is in charge of sexual violence education at her university, explained that "we come in and we're the rape ladies, right? ...When we walk into a room, they're thinking, 'These are man-haters. They're going to tell us stuff that I already know and this is a waste of my time."

Participants noted that males tend to respond more positively to conversations about sexual assault when the message is coming from other men. In particular, audiences of men are more likely to bring up issues of false reporting and accusations. Patricia, director of her university's women's center, recognized the importance of "finding men who are willing to be partners in all of this and [have] this discussion with other men."

Harold, the assistant director for interpersonal violence prevention services, which is housed in his university's women's center, noted the opportunity that his presence as a women's center staff member had for deconstructing the idea that gender-based violence is a women's issue:

> Even as I do a table at new student orientations and I'm even talking to parents about programming that we do, I think my presence, I present as a male, and people kind of experience a cognitive dissonance like, "Okay, you represent the Women's Center, but you're not a woman." It's like, "Absolutely," because we do gender equity and social justice and lead with what our mission is, lead with what our programming is, lead with what services we provide to our campus community.

Constructing gendered spaces. Rather than constructing sexual assault as a gendered issue, issues managers worked to construct gendered spaces. At many universities, there are separate spaces for men and women to talk about issues of sexual assault in a single-gender environment. Most prominently, this occurred within Greek life, as sororities and fraternities are already divided that way, or with presentations to athletic teams. Many universities are working to help men understand issues like sexual assault in all-male environments because they feel less on the defensive in those spaces. Trevor had co-founded a men's group at a previous university in 2003 and was working to get a similar group off the ground at his current university. Trevor described the purpose of a men's group as giving "males a space where they can have conversations about what it means to be a man and challenge one another about healthy sexuality, healthy masculinity, sexism, heterosexism, racism, all kinds of things." Trevor felt this was particularly important because "many colleges and universities historically have not

provided those spaces for males to have conversations about gender and sexism and these kinds of things." Trevor continued about his experiences working with all-male dialogue groups:

> What I have witnessed in my experience is that if you build it, they'll come. If you give men the space, then that gives other men permission to say, "Hey, if they can do that, I can do that. It's cool. It's not intimidating. It's for everyone. I should be interested." There's a curiosity that develops. Often the men that initially come will be your best advocates to get all kinds of men to the group. What we also know from the research is that men, overwhelmingly, are less supportive of sexism and rape-supportive attitudes and jokes than other men think they are. The assumption is that, "I participate in a certain kind of masculinity because I think that's what everyone is doing and everyone is supportive," but the reality is less men are supportive of those things than the broader group understands. It's about us dispelling that attitude.

Many other campuses had similar groups designed as spaces for me to talk about preventing gender-based violence. The national organization Men Can Stop Rape was a partner with several universities.

Compliance issue. For Title IX offices, though, the issue of sexual assault was largely framed around the issue of compliance, creating more a sterile, legalistic approach to the issue. One challenge to constructing sexual assault as an emotional issue was the emphasis being put on universities to make it a compliance issue. As Harold stated, "a lot of times from the compliance piece, that emotion isn't really there. It's 'this is required of you because you are employed or because you are a responsible employee or campus security authority. To fulfill this requirement, this is what you have to do.' So, that emotion isn't really there."

Jill, the public communication specialist in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office at her university, noted they are actively working to get the "legalese" out of their communication. She explained that they are "always working with counsel to try to bend a little bit and flex a little bit and try to make it more warm and welcoming, that language." However, Katherine, the Title IX coordinator at her school, did note that "now that we have Title IX, which yes is more clinical, the compliance stays, but it also frankly is less scary than talking about sexual assault services." So while the Title IX and compliance piece may not engage in emotion in ways that other types of language can, it may also serve a purpose is disengaging sexual assault from emotion in a way that may make it more approachable, particularly for people who do not want to define their experiences as sexual assault.

RQ1b: How, if at all, is sexual assault rhetorically constructed as an issue by university student publics?

Students constructed sexual assault as an issue predominantly affecting women, particularly those involved in Greek life. Although those involved in Greek life were receiving the most sexual assault prevention education, students felt that little was being done to address the core cultural issues creating unsafe environments for women. Participants across focus groups and interviews recognized the need for males to become involved for change to happen. For all students, when they were able to feel a personal connection to the topic of sexual assault, the message became more real and relevant for them. However, if students felt like they were being hit over the head, so to speak, with statistics about the prevalence of the issue or felt manipulated into caring in some way, then they felt less receptive to hearing messages about the issues. Several students indicated the need to make it less heavy through the use of humor, which is where bystander intervention efforts have come in.

Predominantly affecting women. While issues managers walked a delicate balance in their communication about sexual assault as a gender-inclusive issue, students were more willing to say that this is an issue predominantly affecting women. This was done in two primary ways. The first way was to counteract victim blaming statements that put suggested that women were at fault for putting themselves into unsafe situations. One of the female peer educators interviewed recounted an experience she had with a male audience member during one of her presentations:

> Okay, so just the other day there was a guy, he was talking about, he said ... Well I think we were talking about reporting it or something. He was like, "Well girls lie about it anyway," and we were like, "Well actually that's one of the myths that we're talking about." Because it's just like with any other crime, or the false reports. I was saying that you have to think about it this way. There is nothing good comes of anybody saying they were sexually assaulted. I said, "Why would they make it up?" He was like, "For attention," I'm like, "Well think about this, the attention that they're gonna receive, there is no good attention in it. The attention that usually comes to them is usually like why were you wearing this and well why did you go out by yourself, and it's all that. So like, why would they want that?" I try to make him see it that way.

Because issues of safety were less associated with males, men were viewed as able to more easily ignore or discount discussion of sexual assault. One freshman female participant in the first SONA focus group discussed trying to explain her discomfort at walking alone at night because of fears of assault to her male friend, who did not understand why this would be an issue. Because of experiences like this, she said that "I'm worried that the guys are not seeing the severity of the issue." Even for the male peer educator interviewed, he noted that at times the

females in his peer education class would bring up issues he would not understand as a male, but would "take their word for it." He further explained:

> I haven't really thought about the whole gender thing that much. We've had a couple conversations in class where it's like, "Oh you know boys do this, girls do that," you know that kind of thing, you know I don't really think about it.

Another freshman male participant in the second SONA focus group said that "I feel like it's just the college experience. People are finally away from their parents and they have freedom before going into the real world. They can do just whatever they want and they can still get away with it," suggesting again that this is not an issue at the forefront of male's minds as much as women.

Greek life issue. Sexual assault was predominantly constructed as a gendered issue around the gendered nature of the Greek life system. Many of the participants in the focus groups and individual interviews were involved with Greek life in some way. Even for those students who were not involved due to a choice or inability to rush because of their freshmen status, the issue of sexual assault—including prevention education—was heavily tied to Greek life. One participant in the first SONA focus group said that, "Well, I'm in a sorority, so a huge part of being in a sorority is we've had so many different people come in. We've had so many different programs regarding sexual assault." This same student, who was a sophomore, had noted attending around 20 different sexual assault programs. These sexual assault programs occurred throughout the year, with a heavy concentration around Greek week and homecoming. In the second SONA focus group, another sophomore female participant said that "I feel like the majority of information that I get about sexual assault and training and stuff is through my sorority. Like we'll have people come and talk about it, but that's if you're not in a sorority or a fraternity, you don't have the opportunity to do that." For the focus group of

students who had recently formed the sexual assault prevention group on campus, they noted that the Department of Fraternity & Sorority Life had been instrumental in giving them support to start their organization. One participant highlighted:

> I really think they want to do everything, but they also know just as well as we do that fraternity boys are not really thinking about how this effects them at all. And so it's not going to be something they can make people care about.

One of the male students interviewed who was involved in the peer education surrounding issues of sexual assault had become involved in this issue because of his involvement in Greek life:

> I rushed fraternity, and two of the brothers were in CARE. One of them ended up being my big brother and I've always just been really interested in it. Last year towards the end of the year...Well yeah I'd always kind of like, 'Yeah, I'll join CARE, you know I'll do it this year...I'll do it next year.' Last year I found out that one of my best friends was sexually assaulted freshman year. Then after that I was like, you know, immediately filled out the application, got it in.

Although Greek life was an area where a lot of prevention work was occurring at the university, it was also a place where traditional gender roles and norms were being reified. For students, this was seen as "old-fashioned" and "horrible." Participants across focus groups noted certain expectations to sleep with your date during events like away weekend. Additionally, the norm of men bringing "lots of girls" to frat parties was seen a contributing to the problem. In the second SONA focus group, one freshman female participant said that "the whole, guys and frats, they just want more females in the house just so they have more variety and more opportunities to have sex with people."

One female participant in the second SONA focus group discussed how fraternities would have open parties at the beginning of the year "to try to get freshmen girls to come…It's basically just to have more people to hook up with because they're like done with our age." This participant was a sophomore. Another female participant in this focus group, a junior, said the following:

> I legit show up to frat parties in my sweats sometimes because I know all the guys in the house. Like, I really don't care. I'm not going to hook up with any of you guys. But like, a lot of freshmen, they don't realize that yet because they just got here and they think that like they have to try so hard to impress these people. Oh, I have to hook up. You don't have to hook up with them. Don't, you really don't have to hook up with them. But they think they have to to get people to like them and that bothers me.

One participant interviewed noted that while having programming within Greek life is great, there is a lack of calling out the larger culture and factors that are contributing to issues of sexual assault. People would rather feel good about putting on programming and playing lip service to the issue rather than addressing underlying cultural problems. She said the following:

> Everyone would rather tip-toe and they're like, "We don't want to talk about patriarchal norms because half of them don't believe in the patriarchy, and we don't want to talk about rape culture because it makes people uncomfortable. We don't want to blame fraternity men because they're not all rapists." It's like, "Yeah, but 90% of the cases in Greek life, a fraternity man is raping a sorority woman, so that it is valid to say that that is an instance that is happening."

Lacking male involvement. Finally, related to the theme that issues of sexual assault predominantly affecting women, participants across focus groups and interviews recognized the

need for males to become involved for change to happen. One female participant in the first SONA group stated that "I'm like 100%, I want to help with this issue. But I think that the population that is largely interested in this issue are female. And we need to bring in the male population to like be behind the issue as well." One participant in the sexual assault prevention group felt that the biggest hurdle was just getting guys in the room. This participant noted a relationship with a guy in a frat who is passionate about preventing sexual assault who felt that "once they get there and they learn that this is a problem that they should be worried about, and here are the firsthand accounts, they're going to feel just as passionate about it as I do." One of the major problems is forcing men into these settings. For example, pledges are told to go to events to meet a quota for the chapter. One of the female peer educators also noted that males may always feel like they are being accused, again creating a situation where they do not want to attend events or meetings where they may be on the defensive. This peer educator said the following should be emphasized more:

> Yes, males commit the majority of sexual assaults, but the majority of males are not offenders. So saying that it's like a small group of them, and those who are doing the reoffending. Just to get it across that no we're not sitting here blaming all of you for this. Because it kind of comes across heavy like, "Who could be doing more? Males."

During the screening of *The Hunting Ground* put on by the Pan-Hellenic Association on my campus, there was a significant disparity between the number of women present versus the number of men. What was notable to me was that during the question and answer session, one of the males in the room said "I want to help. What can my fraternity do to make you feel safe?" The audiences of females began to clap, and he said, "Don't clap for me. This isn't about me. This is about you." As someone so involved with and impacted by the issue, I do have to remind

myself that males, particularly in the college-aged demographic, really may have no experience or knowledge about the prevalence of these issues.

Another female peer educator noted that some males may recognize certain things are problematic and have questions, but could be "afraid to put themselves out there and recognize it as a problem." This same peer educator recounted a story of a male audience member who had asked her, "What can I do if my friend's being aggressive towards a girl?" This situation made her take the perspective of the male, who may be in an uncomfortable situation of having to confront a friend. She had previously only really considered what to do to help a female out of a problematic situation because of her own experiences. She went on to note that "especially since so many of our facilitators are women that we may not necessarily think, 'Well, if I was a fraternity man,' or whatever that is, 'How would I interact in this situation?'"

Organizational Structure and Issues Management

The challenge for universities in managing issues like sexual assault is that there are so many different moving parts and turfs that the issue touches. Given the decentralized nature of most institutions, there are a number of different departments with specific responsibilities in relationship to various facets of the issue. For example, at many institutions human resources departments were primarily responsible for communication to faculty and staff; women's centers, victims' advocate departments, wellness centers, and counseling centers were more focused on the educational and emotional components of the issue; and Title IX and campus police were concerned with the legal aspects (as well as education related to policies and legal requirements). The relationships that existed between various departments across institutions ranged from highly collaborative to tense. Interestingly, many Title IX offices were newly established at universities (within the last one to two years) because

of new federal mandates and media attention, meaning that many of those interviewed had only been in their positions briefly. This was an interesting juxtaposition to some of the interviewees who had been in their positions within women's centers at their universities for 15+ years as those departments had been established in the 1970s and 1980s as a response to women's rights activism. The level of organizational knowledge and social capital derived from long-standing professional relationships resulted in greater satisfaction and trust between different roles.

RQ2a: How, if at all, do internal organizational constraints affect how university issues managers approach the management of sexual assault?

In answering Research Question 2a, the following themes emerged: *tensions between departments*, *hierarchy*, and *collaboration*.

Tension between departments. Because of my position working on the outreach team for a department tasked with the victim's advocacy and bystander intervention efforts at a university, I got to experience and hear about tensions between different offices firsthand. One of my first experiences was sitting in on a meeting during the summer of 2015 with the assistant director and the assistant coordinator of the victim's advocacy center, the university Title IX coordinator, and the assistant vice president of university marketing and communications. This meeting was designed to get everyone on the same page about the communication initiatives between the different departments. The assistant vice president of marketing and communications noted that there are a number of elements going on with the issue of sexual assault at the university in trying to combine Title IX's "Rule of Thumb" campaign, the White House "It's on Us" initiative, and CARE's "Step Up" campaign. In discussing the various campaigns at the university, CARE and Title IX had no idea who was involved with the "It's on Us" initiative at the university as it had all gone through the student government association

president (an undergraduate student) and there had been no follow up with them. The marketing and communications assistant vice president noted that "the more elements that are added, the less people will respond." The tension in figuring out which elements to include and which to get rid of for message clarity began to show some of the tensions between Title IX and CARE in terms of making such decisions because of who was funding the campaign materials. The Title IX director noted that "you guys are a big line item" when talking about the university marketing and communication impact on the campaign budget, to which assistant vice president responded "as we should be." In the follow up in-depth interview with the assistant director of the victim's advocate center, Aisha, the tension that the financing of the campaign through Title IX became more apparent. She said that "[The Title IX director] and our office, we work together on the marketing pieces. She's the point person because she's paying. She'll get the product and shoot it to us for comments. Then she'll shoot the comments back. Everything filters through her." Since the creation of the Title IX office on this campus, the university marketing and communications has increasingly been involved with how all messages are sent. Aisha described it as follows:

> Basically, they said, "Anybody who wants to do an interview, you need to send us their questions in advance." They want to make sure we're answering once for us, and [the Title IX director]'s answering once for her. Or just a no-go. That was tough to get used to because I felt like we got a little swallowed up. Because at first, everything was going to her. Because she's like, "Well, I can just speak about CARE," and I was like, "Well, just give it to us so we can both have the balance."

While my opportunity to participate with CARE for an entire semester gave me greater insight into the particular tensions that existed between Title IX, the tense relationship that existed between departments at other universities focused more on the legal side of sexual assault and

those focused more on the emotional side was echoed at other universities. Patricia highlighted the following:

> On some campuses, the office of Student Conduct, which is sometimes called Judicial Affairs, has a real adversarial relationship with the Women's Center, because the Women's Center is charged with doing advocacy and Student Conduct or Judicial Affairs feel like that gets in the way of what they need to do as far as their responsibilities go.

At the university in which I conducted my participant observation, there was also a very apparent tension between those who were the sexual assault issue experts and the communication expert. For example, in discussing the type of materials that might be handed out at different events, the assistant vice president of university marketing and communications nonchalantly mentioned whistles as an option (an allusion to rape whistles), which was met by the sexual assault experts with apparent frustration as this fed into common rape myths. At another point during the meeting, the assistant vice president of marketing and communications (a male), responded to the victim's advocates idea to include messaging in the bathrooms at bars as a visual reminder to students with "isn't it too late at that point," to which the advocates responded that this is exactly when people need a reminder of messaging. I got the sense that many of the comments he made about the issue of sexual assault showed a complete lack of knowledge about the issue, which I think is indicative of how this may work at a number of universities (especially with males in communication leadership positions).

Hierarchy. One reason for the tension has to do with which departments are located "higher on the food chain" (Aisha, 2015). In describing her position at the university in comparison to the Title IX director, who had been working at the university for a shorter period of time, Aisha said that "she's on the same level as [the vice president of student affairs]. I'm

two stories down." Latisha, a grant-funded violence prevention educator in the same department, said that when Title IX wants to do a training, "it's coming from a very high place of authority" which can be challenging when "we want to have trainings with students about education and prevention, it's working from a very bottom-up level."

In addition to the power differentials that certain positions are given with the university structure, there were also limitations regarding the difficulty of change. Patricia, who had been at her university for 15 years and had served as director of the women's center for 14 years, noted that because of the "bureaucratic piece of universities, everything takes a while." Because of the slowness of many processes within the universities, hiring new people to take on responsibilities for overburdened staff can take an extended amount of time. At Patricia's university, they were in the process of hiring a Title IX coordinator to solely be responsible for Title IX coordination work because "right now the person who's our vice provost for affirmative action is in that role."

The hierarchical nature of universities, and the lower position that some departments held in this structure, meant that those departments had to count on "backdoor people" (Aisha, 2015). Due to age or perceived lack of seniority on campus, this was a person who could serve as an advocate for the department or had more direct access to higher decision making officials on campus. Bethany echoed this sentiment that "when you're talking about a university and the politics behind it, it's a lot about who you know and who you have direct access to because that's going to lead to change happening in your office."

Collaboration. The idea of counting on "backdoor people" (Aisha, 2015) was more of an informal process to get items moved through university processes more quickly through hierarchical structures. However, universities also utilized more formal channels to collaborate, share resources, and communicate with one another. The need to collaborate was summarized by

Lindsay, who said that “we’re a campus that’s extremely decentralized…we have different folks that do different things.” Because of this, many issues managers across universities described one of their primary responsibilities as coordination. For example, Jonathan described his position as follows:

> I'm in the Institutional Equity Office, but I really do coordinate the people who do the investigations and the disciplinary stuff are in the Office of Student Conduct. Much of our education work is done by our Women's Center. Communications stuff is done by the University's Central Communications office. I don't have any direct authority over anyone. I'm not a supervisor of anyone, so I really do have to coordinate. I have to work with people from throughout the university to make sure that we have a comprehensive and consistent approach to these issues.

Despite some of the tensions noted earlier between departments, as well as struggles to get work done because of the hierarchical nature of universities, collaboration was still necessary across all levels. Patricia noted that “I think it has gotten to the point where people realize that collaborating is smart and that pitting oneself against other people within the whole system really isn’t productive.”

Many universities operationalized collaboration through the formation of task forces or committees to meet regularly to talk about their efforts on sexual assault issues. Nora, who works at the same university as Jonathan, said that “[Jonathan] is kind of spearheading this committee, but we’re basically kind of bringing what everybody’s doing together and figuring out how we can all be more unified and how if someone needed to know some information how they could get it on one place. We’re working on that now because we have so many different things that are going.”

Some university Title IX offices were making an extra concerted effort to collaborate with their victim advocacy centers. Amanda, who was new to her position as Title IX coordinator at her university, noted that working closely with the victim advocacy center was "one of my strategies with compliance…So when I was building that compliance structure, it was really building those relationships and networks." She continued that they work closely with the following departments:

> The advocacy center, our counseling centers, the deans of students, the registrar, the bursar, the people who are often going to make the accommodations, the financial ones. We've built positive relationships there. We've build positive relationships with, it's so scary, but legal counsel, of course, because they help us in different ways. LGBT center. The newspaper, the student newspaper. The student government for sure. Faculty council. We attend an employee/administration monthly meeting.

Legal Constraints to Issues Management

While this study initially framed the law as a constraint to issues management, results showed that legal mandates added a level of credence and urgency to creating change around issues of sexual assault on campus. Carol said that, "I think it's been really hard to get in the door sometimes…We were saying, these are the things that should be happening for such a long time… When it's legally an obligation to do it that it tends to have that type of leverage in that regard." It is important to consider the positive impact that the legal mandates can have on getting messaging to students. However, several constraints were identified by participants in regards to their legal requirements around these issues.

RQ2b: How, if at all, do external legal constraints affect how university issues managers approach the management of sexual assault?

The themes that emerged for Research Question 2b included specific *topics to cover*, the idea of *"compliance plus," unfunded mandates,* and the differences in *reporting options.*

Topics to cover. There were constraints when it came to what legally needed to be covered by universities and the time allotted to these activities. Jade, programming coordinator for the women's center at her university, discussed recent guidance related to Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) amendments to the Clery Act as making "sure that colleges and universities are going over really important topics and information, but when you're receiving requests from student groups that want an hour long program, it can really make it difficult to have flexibility in terms of what you're covering in that program." The VAWA amendments have also expanded the number of topics that universities must cover related to issues of sexual assault. Trevor, a violence prevention health educator, reiterated that "in terms of the way the law impacts us, there are many things that we have to cover. We have to cover in all of our presentations sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, bystander intervention, consent in Title IX. Broadly, those are the things that we have to cover to make sure that we're educating folks on at all times."

"Compliance plus." With legal requirements, many participants explained the minimum threshold they had to meet be compliant with the law, but the extra measures they took in order to be more effective. Amanda described this difference as "the compliance threshold" and "compliance plus." She explained that at her university, "the online modules are a threshold, our compliance threshold. And all this other stuff we're doing is sort of compliance plus." Melissa, who works as a violence prevention and bystander intervention coordinator, discussed presenting

at a Title IX conference and said that “I actually had some Title IX coordinators come up to me afterward to say, ‘Thank you. I’m really glad that you talk to people about going beyond the minimum, going beyond just checking off requirements, checking off boxes.’” There was a concern across universities focusing on the laws, regulations, and rules created a sense, as Latisha stated “‘Okay, well how do we make sure that we’ve done everything right to cover ourselves,’ in a sense, and not as much focus as there needs to be on prevention, and education, from more than a policy standpoint.”

Jonathan noted that although VAWA requires schools to have educational programming regarding sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking, these programs do not have to be mandatory. He said the following:

> I think that leaves it open for schools to do a half-baked job if they aren’t serious about it or if they don’t have the resources to do it right. I think that some of the proposed legislation would require schools to do more and might even require schools to make some of this training mandatory. I think schools that are already making some of the training mandatory are leading the pack and I think that’s a good thing. It’s part of a national emphasis.

Richard, the associate vice president and dean of students at his university, emphasized not focusing “on compliance or what we are required to do.” Rather, “we try to focus on the larger picture…and we also talk about all that we’re doing above and beyond what we’re mandated to do.” Michael, an associate dean of students and director of judicial affairs, felt that where “schools and individuals have failed with Title IX is where they’re going through a checklist of things to make sure that they're following procedures and protocols.” He continued that “they’ve

lost sight of the fact that they're working with somebody who's been traumatized by an experience that they've had... There isn't a cookie cutter approach."

Unfunded mandates. Despite a desire to go beyond the minimum threshold, the lack of resources that universities had to meet, let alone exceed, the minimum threshold provided a challenge. Melissa described her concerns about unfunded mandates as follows:

> There are so many new bills in the federal system, at the state level requiring universities to do more, and I love it…[but] there is no conversation about resources to make all of this happen, and that's what scares me. I don't want to see us getting to a place where we're only doing the bare minimum because that's all we can do.

Bethany echoed this sentiment that at her university, "they're elevating the level of visibility but then on the financial side, they're not really supporting us very much on that aspect." James, who works at the same university as Bethany, but in the Title IX department, said that "the university also needs to put some resources behind them because we can't facilitate 8,000/9,000 students with the staffing that we have now… Anybody can get up, it's just a matter of making it effective."

Interestingly, though, Jonathan had actually worked for 24 years at the Office for Civil Rights—the federal body located within the Department of Education that oversees compliance with these laws—prior to starting his position at a university as a Title IX coordinator. His perspective on the issue of unfunded mandates was quite different from others in that he was not sympathetic to the excuse of lack of resources. He said the following:

> The law is administered by OCR's civil rights statutes and they're necessary to ensure the civil rights of students and employees. It's just the cost of doing business. You're getting money from the federal government. That's how you come under these laws. There's just

> an expectation that you'll have to meet ... That that money comes with strings. I've never been really too sympathetic to that.

However, Jonathan continued that those working in the Office of Civil Rights and developing these policies at the federal level often have little to no experience in a university setting, meaning that what the OCR guidance and VAWA "requires in its regulation may not necessarily be the most practical." Rather than simply saying the legal requirements are the sole constraint, though, Jonathan reiterated that "there are costs involved in this stuff and schools want to be a wise steward of the money that they have, the resources that they have."

Reporting options. One of the legal challenges of communicating about sexual assault is that there are a number of different outcomes based on who is told about the incident. At the broadest level, universities have confidential resources (i.e., victim's advocates, gender violence services, counseling centers, religious counselors) and non-confidential resources (i.e., Title IX and police). One of the challenges that Latisha's university faced was that the Title IX office wanted a coordinated campaign with the victim's advocacy office she worked in, which caused the students to think it was the same office. Latisha stated that "we want them to understand the very clear differences between that they [Title IX] do, and what we do." Many universities, like Becca's, encourage students go to the victim's advocates services first to hear all of their options as this resource is confidential. She said that "the thing with my office is that we offer advocates for anyone who wants to report anywhere. If you're going to go to the Title IX coordinator, if you're going to go to the police, if you're going to go to conducts, wherever you think you want to go and talk to someone, we talk about having an advocate from our office present with you, so that you don't have to do it by yourself, you have someone to talk it through."

University faculty and staff often have reporting obligations under Title IX if their university designates them as a responsible employee or mandatory reporter. This is important because anybody who is considered a responsible employee has to report to the Title IX office and every report is investigated. For many universities, getting buy-in from employees about these policies or even training them can be a challenge. Richard felt that "our biggest challenge really has to do with probably faculty and staff understanding that they're mandatory reporters." Michael noted at his university that "some faculty are afraid because they just want to do the right thing, and they don't want to do the wrong thing, so to speak. Some people are confused about reporting. We have to clear that up in terms of when they report, who they report to, who's a mandated reporter, who isn't." Although less common, some faculty members at universities are more hostile to the idea of having to be mandatory reporters. Amanda noted in one instance that she had "one faculty member asked me why we are involved in the business of sexual assault. And why this wasn't left to the criminal justice system."

Engaging in Dialogue about Sexual Assault

Although many of the communication channels utilized by university issues managers to raise awareness about sexual assault or meet Title IX requirements revolved around one-way communication (i.e., posters, websites, disseminating information via social media, online trainings), there were several ways that they worked to frame the messages to create an opportunity for dialogue. As a reminder, the following research question was posed regarding issue managers' approaches in engaging in dialogue:

> **RQ3a: How, if at all, do university issues managers engage in dialogue with university student publics and each other surrounding issues of sexual assault?**

There were several ways that they worked to frame the messages to create an opportunity for dialogue by highlighting *shared values.* Within a dialogic framework, university issues managers were often overseeing *peer education* groups and developing *alternative forms of engagement* in an effort to *empower* students with the necessary skills to engage in dialogue with their peers. There was a recognition that dialogue is most effective when it is peer-to-peer versus coming from an authoritative or administrative position. When *conversations* were facilitated by university issues managers, there was a recognition that students wanted to be treated like adults.

Shared values. University issues managers worked to frame their messages to university stakeholders as an issue affecting the entire community. For example, Nicole, the assistant dean of students at her private, religiously-affiliated university noted the following:

> We have a unique ability with our Catholic mission and our faith to be able to talk about sexual violence from this perspective of we're called to help each other and to be that good Samaritan for other people. That's the way that we use to engage with students around that topic that can sometimes be challenging to talk about at a Catholic institution.

Similarly, Harold noted that an important goal for his department is to frame the discussion around the values of the university and "getting [students] to recognize that as a member of the Wolfpack [university mascot], as a member of our student body, you have an obligation and a commitment to our community to prevent those behaviors." Latisha explained her desire to make sure that "all incoming students would receive a [bystander intervention training], and be able to say, 'Look, this is how we feel on our campus. This is the norm on our campus, is for people to be positive, and pro-social bystanders.'" This would occur throughout "different points in their time as a college student, being able to receive then a sexual violence conversation. Then at

another point having that sexual violence conversation expand to talk about rape culture, and more societal impacts" (Latisha, 2015).

At times, though, university issues managers worked to highlight shared values within subgroups of the university, in particular Greek life and athletics. When meeting with members of Greek life, Ashley focused on meeting students where they are and looking "into what their specific fraternity's values and principles are, and really say how we can help you in this area, kind of support your values and principles." She went on to explain that when working with athletics, they focus on their role as "leaders among your peers."

Several universities also noted creation of homegrown campaigns and videos for their sexual violence prevention efforts, as much of the already existing materials did not meet the needs or values of their communities. Amanda explained that "sure, we can do the 'It's on Us' and we can do a video, because it's free at the end of the day. But we were trying to feel comfortable in our own skin and try to speak to our identity and not kind of just piggy back on somebody else's." Michael explained his university's desire to create their own bystander intervention campaign because "we've looked at some of these canned programs that are out there, [and] I don't know that we've found one that totally fits the needs of our environment." By customizing the bystander intervention programs, universities were better able to integrate their own campus community values into the presentations.

Peer education. Many participants in this study helped to coordinate or oversee the peer education groups on their campuses. These were typically housed within wellness services, student affairs, or women's centers. Patricia explained that "we're aware that some of the best education happens with students providing the education." At her university, in addition to face-to-face presentations put on by the peer educators on topics of sexual assault, they have also

worked to integrate student voices in all forms of communication to make it “students communicating with students.” The theater troupe that Becca coordinates at her university has received more requests for their campus sexual assault skit “as a way to do an interactive program, talk about the issue, use real college students, use peers when we're talking to other students. I think that's one of the most effective uses of the program, is the students talking to each other, and talking about difficult stuff, but also talking about what they can do about it, how to challenge their friends, how to stand up against it.” She made a point that during these programs, they make sure to highlight that it “is the beginning of a conversation, this is not all of the conversation or all of the education that you should ever do on this.”

In addition to peer education groups designed to create a space for peers to talk with their peers about difficult topics, some universities also had specific peer dialogue groups to provide a space to discuss issues that may be considered taboo. Trevor had begun a peer dialogue group for men at a previous university that had been successful, and was working to relaunch this at his current university. He explained the need for peer dialogue groups because of a lack of “genuine dialogues about sex and sexuality and healthy relationships,” particularly because it is so “intertwined with racism and heterosexism and homophobia.”

He described this peer dialogue group as “an all-male group, and those males get together and have conversations about healthy masculinity, what it means to be a man, and gender roles and gender equity and that kind of thing.” The sole purpose of this group was for males to have a space to talk to each other and challenge each other around issues. Trevor highlighted that many initial conversations were about “the gender box,” which are “the things that men are supposed to do, like be aggressive and make money and be athletic and have sex with females and be leaders versus the things that men are called if they don’t do those things, like punk or faggot or

girly man, these kinds of things." Understanding these boxes that they are put into as males helps them to better understand a culture that tolerates violence towards women.

Alternative forms of engagement. Schools that were integrating theater or artistic aspects to their sexual assault education and prevention efforts were actively trying to make an emotional connection and spur dialogue between students. One university had had an interactive, peer education theater program since 1991 that educates on all forms of interpersonal violence. Becca, the prevention education coordinator at this school, said that the group performs 80 to 90 times for anywhere between 10,000 to 12,000 people. This group performs at every single incoming student orientation and throughout the year in residence halls and classes. The group also performs at high schools and nonprofits, as well as at other universities throughout the country.

Becca explained that each skit followed a general outline based on a scenario and eight specific characters. The sexual assault scenario focuses not just on the people physically involved in the assault, but everyone else around them leading up to the assault. After the skit is performed, the actors stay in-character for the audience to ask them questions about their attitudes and behaviors. Becca explained that the audience members will get really mad at the characters portraying the perpetrator and the people in the skit who stood by and did nothing. Becca recounted the following incident:

> If they didn't feel emotionally attached, if they didn't feel angry and upset, they wouldn't want to get invested in the actors. Oh my gosh, it's a couple years ago.

Someone from the audience got so upset that he got up and almost charged at the stage. After the in-character question portion, the actors then come out of character and finish the educational portion of the program.

Becca stated that “I think theater as a method of education is wonderful. I think pure theater is wonderful, but I think the way we do it is particularly innovative and jarring. It sticks with you. It's impossible for it not to stick with you.” Ultimately, engaging students’ emotions around issues like sexual assault, rather than presenting a series of statistics or policies to them, allows for them to construct the issue as something that affects them. Becca explained it the following way:

> I never really say this, because the term rape culture is a very complicated term for new people to understand. I would have to do a whole training on it if I wanted to, but really we’re talking about upsetting the rape culture. That’s what we’re doing when we show the skits. That's what we’re trying to teach the audience members, without telling them that. I think that emotional response drives them to do that.

At Michael’s university, he discussed an initiative called the “Me Too Monologues” that allowed students to write about their own experiences and perform it. Michael explained that “many of those deal with incidents of sexual misconduct. It takes a lot of guts to be able to write it and then either perform it yourself or see somebody else perform it.” This form of engagement with the issue is cathartic both for the student to use artistic means to communicate their emotions surrounding sexual assault, as well as create an emotional connection between the performer and the audience.

Empowerment. One of the main opportunities that university issues managers saw was to empower students to be able to create dialogue amongst themselves and help each other. Katherine, the Title IX coordinator at her university, wanted to “empower people as a friend and say we have an opportunity to have a conversation about the kind of community we want.” Jade explained that empowering students to be a part of this dialogue required the following:

> Forging relationships with students and giving them more ownership and control of even like the conversation that's taking place, so when, for example, the student newspaper is reporting on an event or on sexual assault, or when it's a student group or students themselves that are planning an event related to sexual assault, I think we see a lot greater turnout and a lot greater communication from those things than if they came from one faculty or staff member. So I think things that are really student driven seem to have the most success.

Empowering students also required giving them "space to do the work" (Trevor, 2015). Trevor continued that "for people that don't do this work, they'll find that students are actually a lot more knowledgeable and passionate about these things than some people think they are."

In addition to empowering students through forging relationships and giving over ownership of programming, another way that university issues managers felt that they were empowering students to engage in dialogue was through skill-building. Jill noted that her role is "figuring out a way to make people feel like these are topics they could talk about and they don't need to use our office." Oftentimes students come in with the idea that sexual assault is an act perpetrated by strangers. Part of skill-building for students is to help them navigate the gray areas of issues like sexual assault, particularly situations involving acquaintances. In Lindsay's experience, "students really want it to be black and white…and it's not black and white, and trying to help students navigate that is really challenging." A major part of skill-building is helping students see where they can intervene in situations where they can help stop a friend from becoming either a perpetrator or victim of sexual assault.

Given that issues like rape culture and systemic inequalities can often be hard for students to completely grasp, especially for incoming freshmen, the focus on bystander intervention has

helped to empower students with skills to intervene in potentially problematic situations. In Harold's office, they work to focus on student behaviors:

> We stray far and wide from getting down into the legal definitions or student rule definitions of sexual violence or sexual battery or relationship violence or domestic violence of whatever the law says. We really talk about what are problematic behaviors that we don't want to have in our community.

In addition to getting students recognize problematic behaviors, it is important to provide "them with tools that they can utilize" (Harold, 2015). Because universities have found that students are mostly telling their friends about incidents rather than staff members, it becomes imperative to provide students with tools on how to intervene in situations, how to talk to their friends about these issues, and what to say to survivors.

At my home university, this skill-building process focused on the three Ds: direct, distract, and delegate. These were the core components of the Step Up! bystander intervention program. Being direct involves intervening into the situation, such as noticing if someone is leaving with a person who looks drunk and asking that person if he or she needs a ride home. Distracting involves creating some sort of scene or diversion to prevent an incident. For example, if someone sees a friend taking a person upstairs who does not look capable of consenting, yelling to that friend that their car is getting towed. Finally, delegating involves getting someone in a position of authority involved in the situation, such as the police, bartender, or resident advisor.

Orientation for incoming students. There were mixed opinions among university issues managers as to the utility of orientation for discussing issues of sexual assault with incoming students or engaging in any meaningful sort of dialogue. Jill explained that at her university,

"everybody on campus believes getting their message in at orientation is really important. We're identifying the reality that students don't have the bandwidth to consume all that's being thrown at them in those first days." The challenge for university issues managers is knowing that while this is a time where students are overwhelmed with information, it is also a time where they are at greatest risk for sexual violence. Given the attention being paid to this issue now, many university issues managers are being given more time at orientation events to discuss this issue. Jonathan noted that his department had a two-hour session with all first year students during orientation, which was a significant increase from previous years. He explained the importance of this because "the first six, to eight, or 10 weeks of the first semester are the red zone where so much sexual assault takes place for first year students, and so getting to them early is important."

However, at a university where sexual misconduct does not currently comprise a significant portion of time during orientation, there was concern that this may not be a good use of time. Aisha felt that in order to make addressing issues of sexual assault at orientation worthwhile, programming "has to be something where people are going to be like, oh yeah, everybody know that about orientation. Like it's a super cool theater group comes in, they have fun with it, that kind of thing. Otherwise I think it's just a wash." In order to be an effective part of engagement in dialogue across universities, orientation events had to be memorable and part of ongoing efforts. A 15-minute presentation on definitions of consent or sexual misconduct policies at universities were what several universities were limited to for students, but this was universally regarded as an ineffective approach to addressing the issues.

Becca's university's theater program was well-known to other university issues managers across the country and was aspirational in many regards. Latisha said the following of the program:

> I think [university] has an amazing, amazing, theater group…What gets me is just after they do these different scenarios and theatrical whatever, they stay in their characters for the talk back with the students. I think that part, right there, could be so powerful just to have that talk back with the perpetrator, and have them sound like the person that's sitting next to them in class, that normally you would gloss over, but after you just saw what happened, you can't really gloss over that anymore.

Another university had received a grant from the Department of Justice to create a musical for students going through new student orientation. This musical is called "Welcome to College" and talks about different issues relating to college. While this orientation musical covered more than issues of sexual assault, there is a scene that involves two people— a male and female— who go to a room. The scene then cuts to the next day and a friend comes up to each of them and asks how the night went. At this point, the actors sing a song about consent. Lindsay explained that the musical "is how students really understand the definition of consent." She continued that they have "worked over the years to really tighten up and work with our orientation staff on what they're doing, and the follow up sessions and making sure that the student conversations throughout the orientation experience are, that the students are trained to be able to talk about these things in a way that is consistent with our messages across [the university]."

RQ3b: How, if at all, do university student publics engage in dialogue with university issues managers and each other surrounding issues of sexual assault?

In order for student to feel comfortable engaging in dialogue about issues of sexual assault, there was often a need for a *personal connection* to the topic. For many students, this personal connection comes from their experiences as survivors of sexual assault. But because of the taboo nature of the topic, there are often inadequate *survivor communities* that develop to

support and provide a space for students to come together. When students to come together and talk about these issues, there can be a great sense of *empowerment* for confronting rape culture. While students appreciated the work of the administration to create programs to engage students in dialogue, particularly in Greek life, these programs were often seen as very repetitive and not building upon previous conversations. Finally, the students' perspective on *orientation* as a place to engage in discussion of issues about sexual assault is also explored in an effort to see how this may match or differ from the university issue managers' perspectives.

Personal connection. For students, engaging in dialogue about issues of sexual assault generally occurred amongst their peers and often stemmed from sort of personal connection to the topic. This included students' own experiences with sexual assault, or the experiences of a friend or family member. Hannah, a sophomore survivor of sexual assault, noted that "it's hard to force people to care about something that they might not care about. That's not an excuse, but I think it's really hard to do." Therefore, any sort of mandatory events and trainings among student populations at large are often not going to reach those who might need to hear the messages the most. Even if students did not have experiences with sexual assault, Hannah felt that having speakers physically in front of students telling their own story helps to create a "human connection" that becomes harder to ignore than an online training that can be muted. One of the female senior students in the class focus group echoed this need to humanize information as a way to empathize and create dialogue:

> I do think the reason [the online training] is so ineffective is because they don't humanize it. It's just like you're taking it as a test. It's statistics and numbers. Whereas to me, the ones that have really stuck have been like I've had people share a letter or a story or, what is that, the T-shirt project at Hornbake. It registers that that's somebody's life.

The one junior male student involved in the peer education noted that his involvement with the issue was the directly result of his best friend being sexually assaulted. He said that "all four of my roommates are in my fraternity and all four of us know the same girl, you know, the reason I'm here…I guess it's something ... It's been a big part of my college ... She's my best friend and it's affected her so it's affected all of us. It's something we still talk about quite often."

For many younger students, particularly the males, there was a lack of connection with the topic that made it seem less relevant to them. They often remained silent on the topic in any personal way, but mostly discussed their experiences with the online training as boring and impersonal.

Survivor community. Students in the focus groups recognized the need for better support systems to create a survivor community. While resources were made available to individual students, there was a lack of dialogue or community between those who had survived a sexual assault. Alex, a senior in her university peer education program and survivor of sexual assault, said the following:

> I think that narratives and storytelling and changing narratives and open them up to something to talk about can be really influential and be really changing in a culture, especially in a campus culture where there is that poor survivor network. Putting that out there and telling your story more makes people telling stories more about the campus makes you more comfortable to talk about their own, and maybe connect with others.

By having a support system, people who had been through similar experiences could engage in dialogue to help them heal and to help others come forward. This type of community also helped to challenge notions that they had to protect themselves from attacks based on

"misinformed ideas of what causes assault" (Alex, 2015). This allowed for dialogue that moved survivors towards "being more open about this isn't your fault, kind of thing. It's been really big, and a lot more people I think are maybe not coming forward and reporting, but coming forward to each other about it" (Alex, 2015).

This need to be vocal and create more dialogue around this issue for survivors was highlighted in the focus group with the sexual assault prevention group that had just formed at my home institution. When I conducted the focus group, the founder of the organization had just done an interview with the school paper that had identified her as a survivor of a sexual assault that had occurred at the university. While it was difficult to come forward in such a public way, the founder felt she had to do it in order to "make it a lot more real for people and it's going to be a lot more, wow. I don't think that, not to my knowledge, there hasn't been an article posted with a person from [university] coming forward and saying that this happened on our campus whose name we know."

Programming for students. Students also had mixed opinions about the utility of engaging in the topic of sexual assault during orientation. Students were aware that freshmen students were at the greatest risk, especially during the first few weeks of the semester. However, addressing the topic in front of a large group of people was not viewed as the best approach. As a peer educator, Alex highlighted that it in her experience, "most productive conversations I've had in educating is when you have smaller groups of people that are really comfortable with each other and can really talk."

Students thought that orientation was an appropriate time to introduce resources to freshmen so that they were aware of what was available to them, although it was noted that students often do not pay much attention to resources until they are actually needed. The utility

of orientation was having a time where all freshmen were required to go to events, so having a captive audience is important. One female student in the class focus group noted that these topics "could be something to incorporate more into freshmen life and things like that rather than having it be a check. From their first experiences on campus, freshmen know what resources are available to them." Integrating these issues into already existing programs, rather than creating programs specifically around these issues, was seen as a more effective way to reach out to new students.

There is a class at my home institution designed for freshmen to give them a semester-long overview of topics related to being in college. Although this is not required of all students to take, a large portion of freshmen students do. One of the male peer educators recounted an experience speaking to one of these classes, and the shock that the class had in talking about sex, drugs, and alcohol. He thought that introducing some of these topics more in orientation would better prime students to know that these are issues to discuss these topics in these smaller settings to "kind of introduce them" and let them know "everybody's an adult, this stuff happens, we need to talk about it."

However, some students felt that an issue with sexual assault prevention programming designed to create dialogue was that the same conversations were occurring. Especially for older students, it did not feel like any of the programming by the university was building upon previous programming and training. Alex highlighted there is "a lot of frustration I've heard from other people, as well, that sometimes it feels like we have the same conversation over and over and over again, and it's not building." Because of the extra focus on sexual assault education within the Greek communities, Alex felt that this problem was particularly pronounced in that community:

> A lot of times, it's always this self-praise of, "Guys, we're starting a convo today. That's what matters, and we started this conversation." I'm like, "Okay, but when's the middle of the conversation, and when are we developing the conversation?" Because we keep starting these conversations, and I don't know where they're going. Building a continuation of messaging would be really good.

Role of Social Media in Engaging in Dialogue

Because of the overwhelming usage of social media by student publics, specific questions were asked to both university issues managers and students about how social media are used to engage students on issues of sexual assault. The following research question was posed to understand how social media was being used to engage in dialogue by issues managers and students:

> **RQ3c: How, if at all, is social media being used to engage in dialogue surrounding issues of sexual assault?**

Overall, students felt positively about the role of social media for potentially engaging in dialogue about issues with their peers, but not necessarily wanting to engage in a dialogue with a perceived authority—such as the Title IX compliance office on campus. While most university departments had some sort of social media presence—generally Facebook and Twitter—these channels were primarily used to share resources. There was a general consensus that students who tended to follow these pages were often the ones that were already knowledgeable and engaged on the topic, so it was not necessarily the best way to reach new audiences. However, social media were viewed by many students as something that *"destigmatizes the conversation"* and creates an opportunity for *linking to dialogue.*

Sharing resources and information. Social media usage by university issues managers was primarily non-dialogic and used "largely to promote programs and share information" (Michael, 2015). The types of programs that were being promoted included, but were not limited to, documentary screenings, survivor presentations, presentations from university departments, Take Back the Night, the Clothesline Project, Walk a Mile in Her Shoes, and general information on how to request bystander intervention trainings.

Based on the interviews, it seemed as if a lot of the social media work was left to student interns. For example, Michael noted that in his office has a student intern "who is our social media guru. She does put a lot of our stuff on Facebook and on Twitter. I'm pretty sure she uses Instagram, too. So, we do use social media in that way, for office programs broadly." Ashley noted that Facebook has helped in the promotion of sexual assault prevention events because students can easily share that information with their peers or the wider community.

Not all departments had the support of student interns for social media, and because of the number of other responsibilities on a few staff members, social media often became a lower priority. Bethany noted that a few years ago it was only herself and one other person in the victim's advocacy office, so "social media was literally the last thing on our minds." However, the development of a peer outreach program this year was seen as a way to increase the visibility of the department on social media. Bethany said that "I'm really excited about the outreach peers because I think it's really essential that we do keep up with the Twitter and Facebook, really put our name out there and continue to do so in a meaningful way." However, Bethany ultimately felt that being active in the community and having a physical presence was always going to be more effective than relying on social media, although it could serve as a complement to in-person programming.

In addition to sharing information about events and programs, some departments were using social media to post relevant and interesting articles in the area of sexual assault. However, there was a need to develop a larger following on social media channels for any type of dialogue to occur. Jade said that "I think that we need to generate more of a following on social media in order for whatever content we're posting to be effective in terms of generating conversation." However, one of the senior male students in the class focus group did not think that social was a "good place to change the attitude about [sexual assault]" and should remain focused more on resource sharing.

Institutional constraints. Several university issues managers felt constrained by what they could say on social media or how they could engage with others. Carol discussed an incident that occurred at her university where a male student recently expelled from campus for issues related to sexual assault made it public on his Facebook. Carol explained that "it's just interesting and fascinating to me that a student who has been accused and found responsible and has been expelled, went public in a social media way to say 'This has happened. I've been wronged.'" However, for her, it becomes difficult knowing if and how to engage in these types of conversations online:

> So, I think that when things like that happen it kind of makes you second guess, "Should I post something? Should I say something? If I was to engage and set the record straight, what might happen?" We are a state institution here, and I think sometimes that tends to weigh heavily on how we use your space like that. How can you engage with them in that way? I don't feel like we have gotten a lot of clear guidelines on what that should be or not be other than just do it.

My own experiences working as part of the peer outreach team also showed some

of the constraints that university issues managers face in trying to engage students in dialogue on social media. The university health center within which the victim's advocate offices were housed had recently undergone efforts to centralize their social media, meaning that messages had to be approved to be a part of the official university discourse. While the center did have its own Twitter account, this was seldom used, except for a few events hosted by the group in the fall semester that included their own hashtags. Because there was not much of a following on these social media accounts, the messages sent out tended to be one-way communication, even when live tweeting events.

Anonymous channels. Surprisingly, anonymous social media channels such as Yik Yak were being used for pro-social purposes, if not dialogic purposes. While it is not uncommon for university public safety officials to follow popular university social channels for safety threats, students in particular were noting that there seemed to be a supportive culture on Yik Yak if people anonymously posted being raped or feeling suicidal. One of the male senior students in the class focus group said the following:

> I think Yik Yak, for all its wrongs, and its negative connotations, I think the one thing that I can always appreciate on Yik Yak is the comments people write when somebody says I have been raped, or something has happened, because people seem very supportive. You should go contact CARE. You should go to the Help Center. It's very, very interesting the dialogue that we see on Yik Yak when it comes to sexual assault and sexual misconduct post versus other bullying posts and it's very, very interesting because it seems like the community is very helpful. I just don't see that in real life.

A female student from the sexual assault prevention group also noted being surprised how supportive people were on Yik Yak, which she noted had changed since she first

started college. She explained that "I think it's that people are becoming aware that we're not stupid college kids. We should be looking out for one another. And I'm proud of us for doing that because that's not the stigma that most people do have about us."

"Destigmatizes the conversation." Although people may not be turning to social media to engage in in-depth dialogue about issues of sexual assault, seeing messages from departments, individuals, and community groups discussing the issue did make some student participants feel that the issue was being destigmatized. Alex felt that social media was "a really important tool" that is "part of getting rid of that stigma." She felt like "the more that we're willing to talk about these things, especially on social media where people might be more tip-toeing about their opinions, that this isn't a political thing." This helps to make it clearer that "it's not this controversial thing, so the more that's proliferated across social media, I feel like that definitely destigmatizes the conversation."

There was consensus amongst both university issues managers and students that those following university social media channels about these issues were already those supportive of prevention efforts and more knowledgeable than most students. Bethany stated that "I think the people that follow our Twitter are our choir—the people that are already into the topic, people that are the activists, the people that have some kind of connection to use in a more personal way." One of the senior female students from the class focus group echoed that "I think the people who are going to follow it are the people who already care about it." Although social media may not be reaching all students, the fact that this information is being put online, shared, and engaged with helps to empower others to say "I want to be more critical of this, or I want to learn more, reach out to that person" (Alex, 2015).

Linking to dialogue. Interestingly, for this project I was connected to one of my student interview participants through Twitter. By following various nonprofit organizations, activist groups, universities, and hashtags related to sexual assault, I discovered this student and her affiliation with my home institution. She is an outspoken activist at the intersection between sexual assault and sports, as well as a survivor herself. Hannah explained the role that social media has played in her activism:

> It gives everyone a voice, which is awesome. I'm just a girl from Tennessee, who is passionate about something. Through Twitter I've gained up to I think eighteen hundred followers now, only because of activism stuff. If I can do that, and if I can get my voice heard, even if it's just by a few people, everyone can. Imagine what a university account could do. It's so important. Social media can be the bane of our existence, but it can also be really helpful and insightful.

Social media have the ability to connect people together on issues of sexual assault and create a global community of survivors and allies. As Hannah, who again is a survivor of sexual assault, stated "it's such a cliché that sexual assault is isolating, but it's true." However, social media "really brings a community together and makes you realize when you're going through a hashtag and there are hundreds and hundreds of stories on there, it really kind of opens your eyes. That's great." Latisha, a university issues manager, also highlighted that "the power of a hashtag, and the power of people being able to share information, is huge." As part of their communication strategy, Harold's department creates specific hashtags for each event they participate in "to connect [student] participation back to the Center, back to our event. It gives them an opportunity to share what they're doing, what they're learning, with their social circle, knowing that they're connecting to people who weren't there."

In addition to developing community and showing the extent of support for sexual assault prevention, social media can connect people to information and places where face-to-face dialogue is occurring. Alex explained that "Twitter and Instagram are non-good places to have a dialogue, but they are good places to link to dialogue." Hannah highlighted that "one of the cool things about Twitter is that they have, my eyes have been opened to all these different conferences and summits and whatever, because they're live-tweeted." Hannah also discussed the importance of Twitter chats to creating a dialogue online. She explained that "this past week, It's On Us did a Twitter chat with the hashtag IOU chat. It's on Us would ask questions or start a dialogue about certain things and different people from, like [Jewish Women International] to universities, to students, to just anybody, would respond with their thoughts." Social media help overcome geographic boundaries to allow people to participate virtually in events, engaging in dialogue as part of that conversation, or using information gained from these events to take it into their own communities.

Obstacles to Engaging in Dialogue

As discussed in the literature review, dialogue is difficult to implement in practice because there is no clear guidance for what constitutes dialogue (Theunissen & Wan Noordin, 2012). There is also an inherent risk in engaging in dialogue because organizations must relinquish control and allow publics to communicate openly. However, understanding where perceived obstacles lie for both university issues managers and student publics can better help address them. With that in mind, the following research question was posed to address obstacles university issues managers face in engaging in dialogue:

RQ4a: What, if any, obstacles do university issues managers face in engaging in dialogue with university student publics and each other surrounding issues of sexual assault?

Senior leadership buy-in. For many issues managers, one of the biggest challenges that they face is lack of support from senior leadership at their institutions. Jonathan echoed the sentiment that "you need buy-in from senior leadership" if there is going to be any space or opportunity for institutional dialogue about issues of sexual assault. Although many of those interviewed have been working on sexual assault prevention efforts at their universities for decades, it was not until more recent media attention, student activism, and legislative deadlines that higher-level administrators started paying attention. Carol highlighted that "it wasn't until Campus SaVE came in and the fact they were like certain things that had to be done by a certain date and time that anybody really started to pay attention to it." In addition to the new laws going into effect, a student group on Carol's campus had worked to compile a white paper of survivor stories on the campus. Carol described the following impact of that white paper:

> That actually was what woke up the administration to be honest, because at our institution and at several institutions, students say something and they aren't really listening to the Women's Center staff or the people doing that work. I had been saying, because I've been there for so long, my colleagues I was working with had been saying it for so long, "We need more advocacy." Nobody was really paying attention until [students] put that white paper together.

In addition to student activism on the issue, increasing media awareness also heightened senior leadership buy-in. However, rather than creating a sustained approach to addressing sexual assault on campus, for many institutions, "it was just, make it go away, as far as difficult public relations issues go" (Patricia, 2015). Patricia explained that there has been a leadership turnover

at her institution that has focused on being proactive on issues of sexual assault, but "that was not something that would have been the case over the other years that I've been here. For example, when I first began, the way that then [President] dealt with things was to basically say, 'your job is to handle these situations and it really is better if we aren't having lots of publicity about them.'"

Student misperceptions. Another obstacle to engaging in dialogue had to do with student misperceptions about availability of services, which can lead to students disengaging completely with certain offices. Some programs found that their very name was preventing some students from engaging with their programming. This was especially salient for departments specifically including "women" in the title in some way. As director of the center for women students, Patricia highlighted that "I'm clear that while our name honors the history of our existence, I don't want that honoring to be at the expense of people not feeling able to or welcome to use our services. It's something that we continue to struggle with." Harold noted that when engaging with students on campus, such as during tabling events, he talks about his role, what he can do to support students, and ends with the fact that his services are located in the women's center. He said this is because "I find that that's often a little marginalizing and people will turn off. 'That's not for me' or 'It's not tied to anything I need to worry about.'" Carol, who serves as the assistant dean of students and the director of women's resource center, explained that her office is going through a "re-branding now, so we are trying to kind of redefine ourselves now that we're not looked as a crisis center." She went on to further explain that "we go out and say, 'Well, our mission is kind of a more inclusive environment for women; however, it's just our primary focus is women but people of all genders are able to come to our programs.'"

Increased media attention also led to differing expectations about transparency for students, which caused distrust in the institutions. Jade explained that this increased attention "is when I've seen the most mismatch because I think a lot of times student groups, especially student activists, want more information and transparency about what is happening in a specific case, but I think the university is kind of limited in terms of what details they're able to release on a specific case in terms of protecting the confidentiality of those involved." Due to a lack of understanding of certain federal guidelines, "it can seem from a student perspective like the university is not being as transparent as it should be." This can influence the trust that students have in the university.

RQ4b: What, if any, obstacles do university student publics face in engaging in dialogue with university issues managers and each other surrounding issues of sexual assault?

Students discussed two primarily obstacles they faced in engaging in dialogue with the administration was a *communication disconnect* and a *lack of trust in the institution*. Furthermore, an additional theme of *lack of accountability* was observed during my participation with the peer outreach group, as well as during the interviews with a peer outreach student and the program director.

Communication disconnect between university and students. One of the primary challenges to even beginning to consider engaging in dialogue with the institution was feeling like there was "a huge communication [gap] through students and administration. And between Title IX and student conduct. Just like everywhere" (female student, senior). Students felt that they did not receive much information from the university about resources surrounding sexual assault. The founder of the sexual assault prevention group noted that her and the executive team of their organization "are actively looking for information on it, and there's still so much we

don't know. So think about what the people who aren't looking for this don't know." In addition to not knowing the resources, a female senior student from the class focus group noted "that one thing that should definitely be communicated, not just that these services exist, but what they can do for you and how they can support you." Although this obstacle is related to basic communication of information (not necessarily dialogue), the fact that students were largely unaware of departments, services, and programs meant that they were missing out on opportunities to engage in dialogue with university issues managers.

Students primarily received information about different programs and resources by word of mouth from each other. As senior male student from the class focus group stated, "I feel like even though [resources] are there, and like some students do know about it, it's almost through like knowing a student who is involved with CARE of something. It's word of mouth. Like the university doesn't really communicate." Another senior male student involved in the same focus group who served as a resident advisor at the university also echoed this:

> I think there's a huge disconnect between what's offered here on campus and what the students actually know…We're able to bring CARE speakers to programs, but not all floors do it. Not all resident assistants do follow through on that, so I think the connection that isn't there is because we don't do enough.

One female freshman student during the second SONA focus group felt that "my dad even got more information than me" regarding safety issues at the university during the parents' orientation session. Students felt like they were not being treated as equal partners in a potential dialogue when they could not even find, or did not feel like they were receiving, basic information from the university.

In addition to not receiving information from the university, students felt a disconnect in knowing what other students or student groups were doing on this issue on campus. One of the focus group members from the sexual assault prevention group felt that "there are, separately, things going on. But there's a disconnect, but if it was connected it would be that much more powerful. And just have that much more potential to make real change. Communication is lost somewhere."

Lack of institutional trust. Students also expressed skepticism at the motives of campus authorities in addressing issues like sexual assault. One of the senior male members of the class focus group said, "I feel like from authorities there's like an attitude of inconvenience more so than something to protect their students. It's something they have to take care of because then they'll get the bad publicity." One of the senior female students in the same focus group said, "I think the university treats it more like a check mark. Like, check, we did our thing, and now it's more individual responsibility rather than, oh, let's create culture." Similarly, another female student from this focus group found the change in attitude from universities regarding transparency to be inauthentic:

> It used to be like let's push it under the rug, let's like hide it, so now universities are like, well, if we come out ahead of it, we're going to look good, which I don't know if they really care about the victims or being more like, oh, we're a university that really cares. Sometimes it really feels like they're just doing it for the press of it.

In addition to a general skepticism about the motivations of the institution, students also brought forth specific instances that made them question the institution's view of this issue as a priority. One issue that emerged in multiple focus groups was an attempt by the university president to reclassify Sexual Assault II as nonconsensual sexual contact. One of the members of the sexual

assault prevention group noted this issue came to light the day after she was assault. She said that " [the president]'s words were like if it wasn't actual penetration he didn't want that to affect them getting a job in the future on their transcript. I read that the next morning and I was like, what the hell. Seriously?" Another junior female student in the second focus group explained the naming situation this way:

> [The president] basically tried to change up the way sexual, like different degrees of sexual assault. And basically, it was grouping like anything but, anything leading up but not rape was like grouped up as lesser violence, but like, there's things that could be considered rape that doesn't have to do with like actual rape. It could be things as severe as that. A lot of people got really upset about that and I did too because there're things that someone could do to a person that could be seen as rape…

In addition to the naming issue around Sexual Assault II or nonconsensual sexual contact, students also highlighted received mixed messages from the administration about the mandatory online training on sexual assault. Originally, the university said "that you would have a block on your schedule if you didn't complete it by a certain date. But then they went back on that" (female, sophomore). A male senior student in the class focus group discussed having interviewed one of the university Title IX investigators as part of a class project during fall 2014. He said the Title IX investigator focused on the following:

> Really trying to make sure that everyone takes it, and make sure that you can't register for classes. Come spring, you could still register for classes without taking the training. And I was like, well, the system doesn't work and the administration, it almost seemed like it was an afterthought. They tried to push it real hard, it didn't work, so they took a step back.

One of the major issues at the university at the time was the recruitment of a basketball player who had been kicked off another university's team for sexual assault charges. Hannah, one of the students interviewed and who is passionate about sports, noted the following:

> The only issue that I've ever had [at the university] is this whole basketball thing. I also say that as someone who goes to every basketball game. You know? I'm a die-hard fan. I'm not saying that as someone on my high horse, criticizing sports, because that's easy to do. My whole thing is, speaking out about these issues and about the team making a decision like that isn't attacking the team. It actually shows how much I care because I hold our team to a higher standard than that. I have to say, that is the only thing that I'm even remotely upset about.

While serving as part of the peer outreach team, I participated in an event hosted by Greek life of a showing of *The Hunting Ground*, followed by a discussion between students and administration. Departments represented at this after-screening discussion were Title IX, victim's advocacy, and athletics. Many of the students in the audience asked pointed questions to the athletics department representative about this case. One of the members of the sexual assault prevention group who attended this event "felt like athletics, most of their responses were, they restated the question in the form of a statement…It was fluff and no real answers were given." This is an exchange that students in the focus group had about the event:

> **Participant A:** I think the questions were awesome. I thought the responses were awful.
>
> **Participant B:** Especially from the athletics department.
>
> **Participant C:** They had no idea what they were talking about.

The perspective of the students about the failure of the university representative to answer their questions about this issue goes back to issues of transparency that the university issues managers

discussed previously. Having attended the discussion in-person, it was my impression that the representative could not say much about the case because of issues with confidentiality, but students took this as willfully disregarding their questions. A lack of institutional trust, combined with legal constraints, were impediments to effective dialogue.

Lack of accountability. As a participant observer in the peer education group, I noticed that the peer educators would come to the biweekly meetings with ideas of how to engage peers, but there was little additional work going on outside of these meetings to bring ideas to fruition. Many of the responsibilities for organizing events and reaching out to people fell on the program director, who seemed to have difficulty delegating tasks to the students. Part of this was because of how the academic credit for students was structured. Although students were participating in the program for academic credit, this credit would not be awarded until the spring semester although the students were also working in the fall semester. Therefore, students were doing this program on top of a full course load and other obligations as students. It then became almost impossible for them to fully engage with outreach work outside of the set meeting hours as they had to prioritize courses that were being graded that semester. One of the outreach peers was participating in the program as a full-time intern for academic credit in her department. One of the obstacles she experienced in particular was other members of the staff monopolizing her time with other work. She also “didn’t even know I was a part of the outreach team until I showed up on the first day.” Similar to my observations as part of the team, this student noted that “I think we’re good at bouncing off ideas and coming up with ideas. I just feel like sometimes the execution fell short, just because sometimes there was no real direction.”

Aisha, the program director, recognized the limitations of the first semester of the peer outreach program. One of the areas she highlighted was a lack of enthusiasm for the topic of

sexual assault advocacy for a few of the students. Because the program director was coordinating and managing all aspects of the department, without more self-direction and drive for the students, it became hard to maintain adequate follow-up with the students about different projects they were working on. In working to address this obstacle in the following semester, Aisha noted wanting to incorporate questions about long-term plans into the vetting for the internship positions. Furthermore, Aisha highlighted that "I need to probably spend some time looking at what skills I want them to pick up and different things like that, for next semester." In this way, it becomes clearer to evaluate the students against clear expectations and a clear set of skills development by the end of the program as part of accountability efforts.

Evaluating Issues Management Communication

So far the results of this study have explored how sexual assault is constructed as an issue, organizational and legal constraints faced by issues managers in communicating about the issue, how universities and students engage in dialogue around these issues, and what obstacles exist to engaging in this dialogue. Evaluation serves as the final step of the issues management process, although evaluating the success of dialogue is difficult to operationalize or measure. The next question focuses on evaluation of these communicative efforts as a difficult, yet important, part of the process as well.

RQ5a: How, if at all, do university issues managers evaluate their communication efforts surrounding sexual assault?

All university issues managers interviewed expressed the importance of evaluation for communication on sexual assault. As Richard said, "it's really all about how do we evaluate what we're doing to make sure it's really working." While the value of evaluation was understood across universities, approaches to evaluating programs varied. A few universities did

not currently have any systems in place to evaluate their communication efforts regarding sexual assault while several were part of the 27 institutions that had participated in the Association for American Universities (AAU) Campus Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct that was administered in spring 2015. Many states had issued legal requirements for universities to develop and administer a *campus climate survey* at their own institutions, although not all universities were at the stage of implementing that yet. To help develop surveys, several institutions were also partnering with faculty in different departments, such as social work and public health, to help create scientifically sound surveys. While there is speculation that there may soon be a federal requirement for universities to conduct a campus climate survey, this has not yet been codified into law.

Campus climate survey. Although universities are required to collect statistics about the number of incidences of sexual assault on their campuses, this is often not an accurate metric for understanding the scope of the problem or how to address it because of vast underreporting. Jade explained that conducting a campus climate survey had been a recommendation of the task force on her campus and was going out in the fall. She said the following:

> I think that that's a really great step in the right direction because…the Clery reports only account for a handful of the sexual assaults that are occurring. We know a lot of assaults go unreported. So I'm hopeful that the campus climate will provide us with more of a holistic picture about students' experiences.

For many universities, such as Lindsay's, they utilized guidance from the White House in developing a campus climate survey for their campus. She explained that the types of questions included "have you attended different programs, different educational programs, have you taken

an online educational program, have you attended a presentation on the sexual misconduct policy, have you attended a bystander intervention presentation, if yes, how useful was it."

In addition to gathering information about general undergraduate and graduate populations through the surveys, universities are also trying to determine the needs of different subgroups and marginalized communities on their campuses. Lindsay's university was specifically looking at international students, students involved in Greek life, and underserved populations. Lindsay explained that "creating subgroup reports, especially their attitudes and beliefs or their knowledge or understanding or feelings about the campus climate to see what the differences are between the specified group and students not of that group" will help guide prevention efforts. For many universities, the survey also revealed gaps in communicating to marginalized populations on campus. Jill said that one of the criticism her university faced "about how we addressed these matters is there are some on campus who feel like our messaging or our services…less so our messaging, our services are provided for white students as opposed to students of color." In explaining the data received from the AAU survey, Katherine noted that their university received a lot of data back about marginalized populations and the specific needs that those populations have regarding sexual assault. Additionally, Latisha's explained:

> Some of the feedback we've gotten so far was…particularly for people of color, has been addressing past experiences, and stigma, and the relationship between sexual violence and how that's been communicated in communities of color verses how it's been communicated for a majority population. Which is very different.

In addition to using the survey data to guide internal efforts to develop more responsive prevention education, university issues managers also were working to make the data more understandable to the campus community in an effort for transparency. Jill's university had

participated in the AAU survey, but they had found that "the language in the survey was very confusing to a lot of people." In describing how the data had been presented by the contracted research firm, she explained the following:

> We spent a lot of time thinking about how people would understand the data. Really, a huge part of our communications effort was trying to come up with some infographics that could help people understand what the survey was and was not. Then, what parts of the survey, how we broke down some of the language down into understandable tidbits for people to read.

Focus groups. In addition to the quantitative assessment provided by campus climate surveys, universities were also utilizing focus groups (both formal and informal) to gather opinions from students and other campus populations. For many universities, focus groups occurred on a semester or yearly basis. Lindsay explained that at her university they had an "It's on Us" summit in March that brought representatives from student groups together. She said that is where "we did like 12 different focus groups, they weren't official focus groups, but we had 12 different tables set up …where we asked specific questions tailored to a specific topic, and that was part of our needs assessment." Questions asked included inquiries about student needs, understandings of the definition of consent, specific concerns within certain communities (such as Greek life), and how students can be involved in changing campus culture. The answers to these questions were used in the development of programs for the following school year and messaging in their communication to students. Lindsay further explained how information from these types of focus groups were used in evaluating their current communication efforts:

> I think as staff and faculty we have our definitions, we have our mandates in terms of what we are supposed to educate everyone on the definition of consent, but how do we

> translate to student-speak? What are some of our barriers that we've have in communicating that and then really thinking about, we have a campaign on consent, or we're developing that, okay, how will that actually decrease sexual assault? So, people just knowing the definition of consent, my personal belief is that may not change behavior. What we really need to do is figure out how do we create an environment where they understand the importance of getting consent, feel comfortable asking for consent, and maybe they can feel more comfortable engaging in sexual activity without alcohol use, because that may be part of this. So, kind of going around, but those are all things that we think about and that we talk about and asking the students what are some of the issues, what do you guys really think about how you can help create change.

Consulting students on how they think about issues, as well as how they speak about issues, can allow for university communication efforts to resonate with them and help to create more sustainable culture change on campuses.

At Jill's university, each semester student interns help to organize focus group sessions to "assess really where we were and the information that people really wanted and that they needed." These focus groups helped to identify "several things that we felt would be really important to have and to roll out, and we prioritized it based on just staff or bandwidth capacity."

In addition to internally organized focus groups, for universities under investigation by the Office of Civil Rights, some of these evaluation efforts were conducted by the Department of Education as part of the feedback for improving Title IX compliance on their campuses. Nicole said this of such focus groups:

> The Department of Education came on campus in the spring and did some focus groups, and provided some feedback based on those focus groups. They were taking that into

> consideration and wrapping up the paperwork side of things in order to fully complete the investigation. It was interesting to hear some students' perceptions, and just giving us some of our marching orders, so to speak, for the year.

Because of being under Title IX investigation, Nicole highlighted that "one of our goals for this year is to be better assessors of our programs."

Program pre- and post-tests. University issues managers were also evaluating many of their programs—in particular bystander intervention training—through pre- and post-test survey methods. As the bystander intervention training coordinator at her university, Latisha noted that she "likes to look at the numbers." Prior to the in-person bystander intervention training, students are given a short survey to fill out to assess their level of comfort in intervening in certain situations. Then, the plan is for a post-test to be sent two-months after the training to gauge any level of behavioral or attitudinal change in the students being able to engage in bystander intervention. Richard's university also utilized the same "Step Up" bystander intervention program and utilized a pre-test and post-test evaluation method "to make sure the content that we are delivering and the way we were delivering it actually was achieving the learning outcomes that we had established." Nora's university also reaches out to students three months after attending the bystander intervention training to ask "how have you been integrating bystander intervention into your daily life since you've been to [name of training]?"

Latisha also discussed how post-tests will be sent out to course instructors at her university to understand how the process of including bystander intervention could be made better for them. To clarify, this would be the instructors in the courses that the peer educators attend to present the bystander intervention training. One of the strategies at this university is to engage students within the classroom setting in order to have a captive audience for the

programming. This requires buy-in from course instructors to devote class time to the training, so knowing how to make this process better for them was seen as an important piece to evaluate. Course instructors would also be instrumental in sending out a survey link to students two months after the bystander intervention training to see how much information students retained.

RQ5b: How, if at all, do university student publics evaluate their communication efforts surrounding sexual assault?

For this study, understanding evaluation of issues management communication from a student perspective comes from those students who serve as peer educators, peer outreach coordinators, resident advisors, and those students who worked to organize their own sexual assault prevention student group. While undergraduate students were typically not conducting extensive forms of evaluation, much of their ability to evaluate issues management communication came through their experiences interacting with peers through informal focus groups and peer education presentations, as well as their perceptions surrounding the potential for culture change.

Focus groups. During my time on the outreach team, the last event the group planned was an evening of focus groups with members of sororities and fraternities. Of all the events that the outreach team worked to put on during the semester, the undergraduate students, as well as the director of CARE, felt that this was the most impactful event. This event included three concurrent focus groups that were facilitated by the peer educators. The invitation for the event stated that the following:

> The goal of the focus group is to create a safe, open dialogue to discuss best practices, past initiatives and future directions. This is an opportunity for you to intermingle with

> your Interfraternity Council/Panhellenic Association counterparts. From this focus group we hope we can further establish the response to these issues at [the university].

The outreach team had developed the focus group script for the event, and the types of questions asked included *What do the values of your chapter mean to you?, What is working in relation to prevention and programming?*," and *What is not working?* Chanel, one of the outreach interns, felt the focus groups were so successful because "there was so much good feedback, and the people that did come cared about the topic." Because the students who attended the focus group were not mandated to come, Chanel felt that "people were really motivated by the topic. I thought that was one of the most important parts of it and what made it so successful."

Presentations. Through the five to 10 presentations that each peer educator gave a semester, they were able to interact with a number of their peers and often conducted informal evaluations of their responses in the moment. Peer educators noted that students are often "very quiet throughout" and "a little bit nervous to even talk about things." One of the changes that has been made in terms of the presentations given to underclassmen is more of a focus on bystander intervention in all scenarios—such as problematic drinking behaviors—rather than just in sexual assault scenarios. Because of the hesitancy to talk about sexual assault, one of the peer educators noted that "a lot of them focus on the drinking aspect of the Step Up presentation, just because I think it's easy to talk about. It's easier to talk about like, 'What does problematic pre-gaming look like?' versus, 'How do you know if somebody's just hooking up or going to assault somebody?'"

One of the peer educators thought that too much emphasis was being placed on the bystander intervention training as she had "actually gotten more dialogue back from the sexual violence" specific training. She explained that "with the sexual violence one it creates more

room for questions because people have learned different things and have been taught different things, so they're more curious, they have more opinions about that one I've found."

Perception of culture change. Interestingly, students were quick to notice the limitations of education and prevention efforts at the college level and many provided evaluative statements regarding changing the culture around sexual assault. Despite getting information, which may be seen as a positive from the university issues managers' perspective, one of the peer educators noted that "things aren't changing. That's the frustrating part, is that I do see some people becoming more educated on the issues." Students were still experiencing a number of disclosures from their friends that they had been victims of sexual assault, despite heightened education efforts. The same peer educator said "that's really great that in theory more people know what sexual assault is, and more people know how to intervene in a bystander situation, but I've had two disclosures in the last month alone."

Students recognized that much of their evaluative efforts of communication surrounding sexual assault should be directed at the curriculum in their K-12 education settings. The following exchange occurred in the class focus group:

> **Male student A:** I think attitude change starts in primary school. The curriculum needs to change from the beginning that we enter the school system.
>
> **Male student B:** Yeah, I think it's really hard to find the solution now when a lot of the issues stem from early years.
>
> **Female student A:** It stems from before you even enter school.

The issue of how primary and secondary education addresses issues of sexual education was something that peer educators had discussed in their weekly class. Morgan explained how enlightening this class period was to understanding the larger extent of the issue because "so

many people get so many different backgrounds of education from their school. Like whether you went to Catholic school, public school. You all received different education, especially depending on the state you went to, so we've gone over that." For students, the evaluation of issues management communication on college campuses led to a larger evaluation of the limitations of sexual education throughout their time in school.

Chapter 5—Discussion

At the core of this study is the idea that the full emotional and gendered scope of issues are not considered by organizations because not all experiences are shared by those in issues management positions. In order to understand which issues are considered by issues managers, and how those issues are considered, it is necessary to understand how issues are constructed, interpreted, and communicated. In this discussion I will focus on broader implications for how some issues may be understood and constructed as a gendered and emotional. Next, I will explain how the results of this study help to extend an engagement approach to issues management through the understanding the intersections of emotion, gender, and dialogue. Then, I will focus on some of the specific implications from this study related to the use of social media for dialogue surrounding emotional and gendered issues. After exploring dialogue, I will then explore how the findings of this study relate to evaluating an engagement approach to issues management. Finally, I offer a normative model of inclusive issues management to build upon and offer a more holistic approach to issues management that better accounts for emotional and gendered issues, and engages publics in dialogue throughout the issues management process.

Constructing Issues as Gendered and Emotional

In this section, I will discuss how the results of this study provide additional depth to our understanding of how issues are constructed as gendered and emotional. To reiterate, issues are socially constructed through a process of meaning making and discursive negotiation (Hallahan, 2001; Heath, 2006). Therefore, examining how issues managers and student publics discursively constructed sexual assault as an issue is important to understanding underlying aspects of gender and emotion.

As explained in the literature review, gender and sex are different, although interrelated, concepts. Sex is biological while gender is a social construction (Scott, 1986; Wiegman, 2002). Based on the interviews with issues managers, sexual assault was consistently, and strategically, constructed as a gender-inclusive issue. Gender-inclusivity was articulated as a way to bring both men and women into the conversation, as well as to help recognize a broader range of identities on the gender spectrum. It was also designed to move away from the narrative of males as perpetrators and females as victims, which often left males on the defensive and females feeling as if sexual assault is just a women's issue.

However, this focus on men versus women indicates that the language surrounding gender-inclusivity was actually being conflated with sex (Scott, 1986; Wiegman, 2002). Decoupling these traditional binaries from sexual assault was also an attempt to broaden the resonance of the messages with the university community, but it also reified the binaries of which issues can be public or private. Feminine issues, like sexual assault, have typically been relegated to the private sphere (Habermas, 1991). However, by discursively constructed sexual assault as gender-inclusive—therefore encompassing the masculine as well—it then becomes an issue that can be considered publicly.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to constructing the issue of sexual assault in this way. One of the primary advantages from an issues management perspective—and a broader communication perspective—is that it can be more effective for large-scale university campaigns to create messaging that can target the largest number of publics. However, a potential disadvantage of this approach is that certain marginalized communities may not read themselves into this messaging if they have previously been excluded from dominant discourses. If such inclusive messaging has not been part of an organization's approach to interacting with publics

in the past, it can possibly be read more as meeting a legal requirement than as actual engagement build on trust and transparency. Gender-inclusivity must not just be a part of messaging, but also a part of the operations of the organization in terms of who has decision-making power and representation on committees.

Returning to the specific context of universities, gender-inclusive language framed everyone as equally responsible for preventing sexual assault from happening, although certain groups are actually more responsible for perpetuating these crimes. This gender-inclusive discourse surrounding sexual assault could be seen prominently in the bystander intervention trainings, which often focused less specifically on sexual assault to include other types of issues such as binge drinking. The gender-neutral language and ambiguous names used in scenarios further constructed sexual assault as a gender-inclusive issue. In this way, both males and females were acknowledged as victims of a gendered system (Woods, 1997). Interestingly, issues managers also discussed constructing private spaces for males to talk about masculinity. There was a need to construct private spaces to talk about healthy masculinity and emotions because issues like sex and emotion are still relegated to the private sphere.

It was clear from this study that it was necessary to frame this issue as broader than affecting women (although the majority of victims are women) in order for the issue to no longer remain silenced. If focusing on the specific impact to women, a common refrain is that men can also be the victims of rape and that efforts were unfairly targeting one group. This idea of gender-inclusivity did often include an effort to talk about sexual minorities (that violence could occur female-to-female or male-to-male), but this did not necessarily translate into specific calls to consider other markers of identity—such as race—within messaging. Although it was

recognized by issue managers that sexual violence looks different in certain communities, the messages being given to university students was ultimately one of sameness.

However, one issue with focusing on this construction of gender-inclusivity surrounding sexual assault is that it may begin to obscure difference and lived experiences (Golombisky, 2015). As stated previously, Grabosky (1995) noted that "gender is the most consistent factor" (p. 2) in explaining who fears crime, and for women, there is greater concern about sexual assault. Although issues managers worked to talk about their initiatives with gender-inclusive discourse, students were more willing to highlight that this is an issue that impacts women's security more prominently. In particular, the focus on the prevalence of sexual assault within Greek life communities tied back directly to students' discussion of how traditional gender roles are reified in this system. For example, students discussed the sexual expectations that came with inviting a date on away weekend, the type of dress and gender performance expected of women, and the need for males to bring multiple females with them to parties to increase the number of choices for the frat brothers. In discussing many of the cultural attitudes towards women, as described in their Greek life examples, students also discussed the need for more male involvement in sexual assault prevention. This was also recognized by issues managers who discussed constructing spaces just for males to talk about gender and the effect of gendered expectations on them for what it means to be a man. This speaks to the notion that everyone is gendered, and that societal expectations surrounding gender for both males and females are core issues of why sexual violence occurs (Wood, 1997).

While it is understandable that those in positions representing universities must remain inclusive in their language, this should not be at the detriment of recognizing inequalities that are at the root of issues. This construction of emotional and gendered issues as inclusive must still

address the causes and conditions that allow certain groups' ideas, production, and even existence to have greater value and higher status than others (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2010). Therefore, rather than focusing on gender equality, we should consider the broader goal of social justice as a truer marker of inclusivity (Golombisky, 2015). Golombisky (2015) defined social justice as "sustainable material and social circumstances in which all people enjoy general wellbeing, participate in self-determining communities, and thrive in the pursuit of fulfilling lives" (pp. 389-390).

Another way to think about this is through social justice as communication activism, which is political, polyvocal, and transformative (Wackwitz & Rakow, 2007). Viewing the construction of issues as a form of communication activism allows for fuller reflection about standpoint and power relations (Golombisky, 2015). Issues managers should incorporate this perspective of communication activism and social justice into environmental scanning of issues as a way to be aware of counterpublics that may be forming. Rather than viewing the development of counterpublics as oppositional to organizational objectives, issues managers should work to build relationships with these communities as they can serve as strong allies for addressing emotional and gendered issues.

One way that students discussed working to create spaces for dialogue surrounding sexual assault was through the development of survivor communities. I argue that these survivor communities can be considered a counterpublic because they serve as "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (Fraser, 1992, p. 123). Based on the results of this study, counterpublics serve an important role for addressing emotional and gendered issues. In the case of sexual assault, these survivor communities

provided a space for individuals to reinterpret their identities from victims to survivors, to overcome feelings of shame and guilt, and come together to counter the dominant culture that allows for the continued perpetration of sexual violence. This was seen as building a stronger network between survivors of sexual assault at universities to work to confront the isolation felt by survivors for having this issue relegated to the private sphere. Emotions like shame and guilt were present for survivors, and are part of moral emotions (Jasper, 2011). It is important to remember that "privacy is publicly constructed" (Warner, 2002, p. 62), so the shame and guilt felt by survivors of sexual assault is in part because of how sexuality is constructed in the public sphere (Hubbard, 1991; Kimmel, 2004). However, in creating communities of people who have similar experiences, it normalizes and destigmatizes the experience. When survivors come together, they are not alone, helping to make the issue public, and offering a space for healing. Take the shame and guilt experienced by survivors of sexual assault who do not want to talk about the issue. In sharing the issue with others, making it public, there is healing.

How issues managers and students interpret, respond to, and implement discourse surrounding issues is part of creating rhetorical situations (Vatz, 1973). In this study, a rhetorical situation means that "situations obtain their character from the rhetoric which surrounds them or creates them" (Vatz, 1973, p. 159). It is typical for different parts of an organization or various publics to perceive issues in their own ways by the rhetoric used to construct the issues (Jaques, 2004). The type of job position held within the university largely shaped the rhetoric used by issues managers to construct sexual assault as a gendered and emotional issue. Those in victims' advocacy or sexual assault prevention education positions tended to focus more on the emotional well-being and accommodations for survivors. Whereas, in many cases, the compliance focus of issues managers in Title IX positions in particular stripped away the emotion from the issue.

Because of the diverse perspectives that people can bring to the same issue, it is beneficial to have multiple issues managers working on these different aspects. However, this approach does not work if the organization becomes siloed in the responsibilities of each of these positions and the issues managers do not maintain an ongoing dialogue amongst themselves.

The next section focuses on the implications of this study for considering organizational and legal constraints to issues management that have an impact on this collaborative potential.

Overcoming Organizational and Legal Constraints to Issues Management

Results of this study found that many universities were operating under a command-and-control leadership structure that encouraged information sharing up a chain of command rather than across the organization (Schroeder, 1999a, 1999b; Thompson, 1965). For large, decentralized institutions, this can be problematic as it limits the flow of information within specific silos or areas of work (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Feelings of inclusion within organizational processes varied across institutions but was largely related to the degree that employees perceived being valued members (Shore et al, 2011). While there were relatively high degrees of feelings of inclusion across institutions at the peer, work group, and supervisor levels (Mor Barak, 2005), the level that varied most for inclusivity occurred at the higher management level.

For example, at my home institution, power differentials between the Title IX director's role and the victim's advocate director meant that the Title IX director was at the same level in the university hierarchy as the dean of student affairs—a position with more direct access to the university president. This led to challenges with the victim's advocacy services feeling that their education and prevention efforts were working from the bottom-up while Title IX worked from

the top-down, meaning that their initiatives were better resourced and had greater access to higher level decision-making processes. While these approaches are not inherently at odds, the victim's advocate director's main concerns stemmed from not feeling included and consulted in key university efforts.

However, other institutions moved away from this command-and-control leadership of directors to more of a coordination role. At Jonathan's institution, he served as Director of Title IX Compliance within the Office of Institutional Equity. Because his job was to coordinate Title IX compliance across the university, his position had no direct authority over anyone. Rather, he served as a liaison between departments so that his focus could remain on the issue rather than turf battles. Having a specific person within a coordination and liaison role helped to build collaborative efforts that could combine resources and expertise to find new solutions to problems (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Stein & Short, 2001). Collaboration on issues was necessary because university issues managers were generally only responsible for one aspect of issues. In addition to legal compliance issues, the emotional well-being of survivors needed to be considered. This type of coordination structure allowed for greater inclusion at the higher management levels, which also helped to create a more inclusive environment organization-wide. This allowed issues managers to approach issues management from a more holistic perspective.

Creating an inclusive environment organization-wide was not an easy task given the number of publics at universities. The differing levels of experience with students (undergraduate and graduate), faculty, and staff on campus can create a challenge for university issues managers in creating zones of meaning (Heath, 1994b). Zones of meaning are "shared realities of members of particular publics" (Leitch & Motion, 2010, p. 102). Because inclusion

focuses on the degree to which individuals feel a part of the organization's critical processes (Miller, 1998; Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998), it is necessary to involve all relevant stakeholders in decision-making processes. Many universities had developed task forces to address issues of sexual assault, although in some cases there were key stakeholders missing from the groups, such as university communication professionals and graduate students. In general, though, such collaborative efforts allowed for greater representation of expertise (functional area) and background (gender, race, social class) that creates opportunities for a greater diversity of input into organizational policies and decision making (Kuh, 2006; Kuh et al., 2005). A greater focus on collaboration across units within universities can assist in adapting to new socio-political pressures to more effectively address the issue of sexual assault.

While legal requirements for addressing sexual assault on campuses added legitimacy and heightened urgency for addressing the issue, the rhetoric surrounding "unfunded mandates" was prevalent. Despite a desire to go beyond the minimum threshold, the lack of resources that many universities had to address this issue with tens of thousands of people provided a challenge. Many issues managers expressed a concern with being in a position to only do the minimum required of them by law because there were not enough resources for anything else. This, in turn, could then be perceived by publics that the university does not care about the issue and is doing the bare minimum to address it.

However, this is also where the importance of collaboration across the university becomes important. If the responsibilities and burdens for compliance efforts can be shared, universities can begin operating under the mentality of "compliance plus" as a way to acknowledge the need to go beyond the minimum threshold. This example of "compliance plus" thinking was operationalized at Amanda's institution through the Title IX allies program that

worked to catalyze people at the institution around issues of Title IX to help spread the message about the resources available to create further engagement between the organization and publics. The next section explores in greater depth the implications that this study has for how to engage in dialogue surrounding emotional and gendered issues.

Engaging in Dialogue Surrounding Emotional and Gendered Issues

Engagement is part of dialogue and focuses on the meaning-making process between organizations and publics that allows for greater understanding and goodwill (Johnston, 2014; Taylor & Kent, 2014). One issue that can get in the way of dialogue between university issues managers and students is that engaging in dialogue requires a level playing field among participants and setting aside status (Sommerfeldt, 2013). Not surprisingly, participants in this study recognized that dialogue is most effective when it is peer-to-peer versus coming from those in an authoritative or administrative position. While a number of issues managers oversaw peer education programs as part of their job responsibilities, much of the actual outreach in the form of dialogue to other students was through other students. University issues managers worked to train and oversee these undergraduate peer educators, but the limitations of being in perceived positions of authority were recognized. Generational differences between issues managers and students were also acknowledged, with one issues manager noting that information coming from older people like herself "can feel like talking about sex with their mom."

While all publics were aware of the issue's "social significance" (Hallahan, 2001, p. 30), the lack of perceived relevance to certain groups—and the complexity of the topic— makes it difficult for one common messaging strategy to resonate with all university publics. Therefore, university issues managers must work to find opportunities to build relationships with all publics to understand how the issue may be perceived differently and what messaging needs to be

conveyed. For example, in this study all university issues managers were engaging with undergraduate student publics, but many issues managers were not able to fully engage with other publics such as graduate students, faculty members, and staff. Some of the issues related to sexual assault for these groups were understanding the mandatory reporting obligations if students came to them about an assault and how to make academic accommodations for students. Although not the primary focus of this study, issues managers also noted that for faculty, graduate students, and staff, the more common complaints that Title IX handled for these groups related to sexual harassment as opposed to sexual assault.

In the focus groups, undergraduate students were willing to engage in dialogue about sexual assault at universities in the abstract—such as discussing high profile sexual assault or harassment at other universities—but many did not make the leap to similar issues happening at their university. Oftentimes these were issues that were framed as affecting "Ivy League" universities more prominently. However, the interviews with peer educators, and the focus group of the sexual assault violence prevention group, showed a different side to how sexual assault was portrayed on their campus. Because many students had been sexually assaulted at the university, or knew someone who had been, the urgency of addressing the issue was heightened for them. For those interviewed in this study, having a personal connection to the topic, hearing people's stories, and understanding these lived experiences is what made information memorable and what contributed to attitude change. However, even if students did not have a personal connection, actions as simple as using students to be narrators in online training videos made communication feel more dialogic to students as it felt more like a conversation than like a lecture from an older adult.

Traditionally, dialogue has been based on argumentative approaches and structures (Heath & Palenchar, 2009). Such communicative structures are based on rational and logical appeals that are foundational to the public sphere (Habermas, 1991). Of particular note for this study were the alternative forms of engagement that some universities were implementing that allowed for dialogue and the expression of emotions. As stated previously, dialogue can move beyond words themselves and encompass artistic, performative, and unconventional ways of engaging that can often incorporate emotion in ways that words alone cannot (Boyd & Van Sleete, 2009; Droogsma, 2009; Weaver, 2010). Importantly, including emotion provides for authentic opportunities to create dialogue and include people in difficult discussions. Without emotion, true dialogue cannot occur because emotions bind people together (Turner & Stets, 2005). Spaces such as The Clothesline Project were being utilized by universities to make these stigmatized and private issues more visible on their campuses (Droogsma, 2009). Several universities also integrated theater performances into their outreach as a way to capture the emotions and complexity of sexual assault, as well as larger art installations that served as conversation starters. These types of programs helped draw students into a conversation about emotional and gendered issues rather than overwhelming them to the point that they were not receptive to the messages.

These alternative forms of engagement utilized by university communicators resembled the form of dialogue outlined by Kent and Taylor (2002) that focused on mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk, and commitment. By moving away from a typical format of a speaker presenting information to an audience, these communication tactics helped to foster a collaborative orientation and mutual equality for participants. For installations such as The Clothesline Project, publics were directly involved in creating the art, which featured t-shirts they could write their

personal experiences with the issue. In this way, publics were able to articulate their demands on the organization, which is a key aspect of propinquity. These alternative forms of engagement are also capable to tapping into shared emotions to help build a climate of supportiveness and trust through empathy. Because these forms of communication are less controlled—even if sponsored by the organization—there is a potential for unanticipated consequences, creating a degree of risk. Finally, and most importantly, these forms of engagement mark a commitment by organizations to go beyond the minimum required by them and a desire to work towards a common understanding.

Dialogue and Social Media

In addition to the artistic and performative alternative forms of engagement, online spaces were also seen as a potential way to destigmatize conversations surrounding sexual assault. However, this opinion was not held by all participants and highlighted the boon and burden that online spaces offer to effective communication, particularly when challenging the status quo. There was a sharp contrast in this study between those who felt that social media were dangerous and hostile places to discuss emotional and gendered issues, while others felt that engaging in dialogue on these channels helped to destigmatize the discussion.

Although nearly all university issues managers noted having some sort of social media presence, this generally only included one-way messages sent out on Facebook or Twitter about upcoming events. It is not surprising that there was hesitancy by those in university administration positions to open up a dialogue on social media channels. Allowing for commenting and engagement via social media requires relinquishing control of channels, which can be difficult and risky. However, risk is required for real dialogue (Kent & Taylor, 2002), indicating that social media are not truly being used dialogically by university issues managers.

University issues managers noted that there were institutional constraints to giving up control on social media channels. As described in the results, one university issue manager recounted an experience of a student accused of sexual assault turning to the university's official social media account to air his grievances. The role as a public institution was also seen as a constraint to using social media for dialogue, as well as the centralization of social media within university marketing that tightly controlled what individual departments could post online. From an institutional perspective, there are many disadvantages to uncontrolled dialogue surrounding emotional and gendered issues on social media. For example, this increases the possibility that confidential information may be shared publicly, as indicated at the one university where the accused student turned to university social media to discuss his case.

For those that felt social media create opportunities for linking to external dialogues, findings from this study confirmed what results from other studies that Twitter can offer emotional and community support for users (Saffer, Sommerfeldt, & Taylor, 2013; Stephens & Malone, 2009). Furthermore, Twitter can be used to facilitate social connections (Smith, 2010), as evidenced by the results of this study. For example, one student participant in this study used Twitter to meet new people involved in sexual assault advocacy work, which is how the student became connected with this research project initially. While online spaces should not completely replace in-person dialogic interactions, especially when considering creating a survivor culture on campuses, it can be a place to start destigmatizing conversations and gaining support from likeminded people. Many survivors were turning to online spaces to find communities for support because they were not aware of any such resources on their campuses. University issues managers can work to meet these survivors in the online spaces to which they are turning to help connect them to in-person support communities.

One of the most interesting findings related to social media in this study was the way that Yik Yak was being used in a pro-social way to help students receive emotional support and resource information. Yik Yak was launched in 2013 and gained massive popularity on college campuses, largely because of its location-based and anonymous attributes (Black, Mezzina, & Thompson, 2016). While much of our understandings of social media engagement are driven by what organizations do (Bruce & Shelley, 2010), the responses received on Yik Yak appeared to becoming more from a peer-to-peer level. University issues managers noted periodically scanning Yik Yak as part of their environmental scanning efforts, no issues managers discussed engaging with students on this anonymous platform. Therefore, it appeared from this study that students were using this social media channel to engage with each other.

Online social networks are of critical importance to young adults during periods of social adjustment, such as coming to college (Yang & Brown, 2013). Because young adults are particularly susceptible to fitting into perceived norms during this time, scholars have begun to recognize the opportunities that platforms like Yik Yak present for inserting pro-social posts to change perceived norms on campus around risky behaviors to safer options (Moreno, Kacvinsky, Pumper, Wachowski, & Whitehill, 2013). The anonymity of the platform provides an egalitarian structure to either counteract or exacerbate the normative influence of specific others in a community (Snyder, 2013). Therefore, platforms like Yik Yak may be a place that university issues managers can participate more to work to change the cultural norms around sexual assault on campus and tap into changing community values.

Challenges to Dialogue

One of the primary challenges to dialogue in this study was making students aware of the resources and departments on campus and getting students to these places where dialogue can

occur. For example, the women's center on campus was open to all students, but there was a perception that programming from there was not for men. This is why it was important for various departments to conduct outreach on campus, although this can often get lost with the number of programs competing for student interests. One way to overcome this challenge was to bring discussions about sexual assault directly into the classrooms. However, this involved buy-in from faculty and often getting permission to take over at least one full class period for a course.

At one university, they were piloting a new program to work to incorporate bystander intervention training into a one-credit course designed as an introduction to college for new students. While not all students were required to take this, a sizeable portion of freshmen students did take this course. There was also discussion of incorporating sexual assault training into other general education courses as a way to ensure the greatest number of students receive exposure to and an introduction to these ideas. Rather than just a one-time program, though, such dialogues should be incorporated through the collegiate career to build upon previous knowledge. However, this becomes tricky to operationalize in an academic environment as there are high levels of decentralization and a culture of academic freedom in the classroom. However, one of the core challenges of this study in a university setting was the siloing between academic affairs and student affairs, rather than considering the holistic nature of issues facing students.

In addition to getting the messages to students, another challenge was the lack of trust that many students had towards the institution. This is a challenge to dialogue because trust and transparency are foundational to relationships (Burchell & Cook, 2006). In fact, trust has been determined to be one of the four focal characteristics of a quality organization-public relationship (Grunig & Huang, 2000). However, from the results of this study, it was clear that students did

not fully trust the university to have the safety of students as their primary motivation for addressing sexual assault. Students remarked that universities "have to take care of it because then they'll get the bad publicity" while others discussed the issue being treated "like a check mark" rather than making strides to creating culture change on campus. In this regard, universities may be failing to develop the social capital—features of social organizations that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit—that is a core component of the engagement process (Sommerfeldt, 2013; Taylor & Kent, 2014). Students were aware that the issue of sexual assault on college campuses had been receiving a significant amount of media attention, and the onslaught of new required trainings, campaigns, offices, and policies on campus were seen as an attempt to protect their reputation versus truly engage with students in a meaningful way.

Communication efforts that were one-way—such as online trainings— were viewed as less effective for addressing gendered and emotional issues. For students, the mandatory online trainings represented to them ineffective communication practices surrounding sexual assault prevention at their universities. While issue managers recognized the limitations of online trainings, it was often seen as the only way to get their message out to the tens of thousands of students on their campuses. Online trainings are also part of new legal requirements, but many universities—although not all—were going beyond this compliance minimum to offer additional types of programming to students.

In addition to student awareness on the issue, increased media attention also heightened senior leadership buy-in at many institutions. However, rather than creating a sustained approach to addressing sexual assault on campus, for many institutions, "it was just, make it go away, as far as difficult public relations issues go." This supports prior literature that dialogue is not

understood or appreciated by leadership (e.g., Kent & Taylor, 2002; Vestal, Fralicx, & Spreier, 1997). For example, results from this study revealed tensions between tensions between newly created Title IX offices and longer-standing victim's advocacy services and women's centers. In many cases, resources were going to Title IX because of the legal issues and potential for lawsuits rather than the programs that work to engage students in dialogue, such as the men's dialogue group on Trevor's campus. However, all-male peer education groups have been shown to reduce beliefs in common rape myths and also has indicated a decreased likelihood that participants in such programs will be sexually coercive (Foubert & Marriott, 1997). Such long-term oriented dialogue programs may not produce the more instantaneous or measurable results that launching an online training can provide, meaning that such programs are often not prioritized. The next way discusses how university issues managers evaluated their success for addressing emotional and gendered issues like sexual assault at their institutions.

Evaluating an Engagement Approach to Issues Management

As Jaques (2004) wrote, issues centered around emotions and feelings are the hardest to manage because they have fewer "objective" attributes. For this study, the subjective nature of emotions and the abstract concept of dialogue made success surrounding managing the issue of sexual assault difficult to ascertain. The findings from this study showed that it is challenging to determine what to measure. Even recording statistics can be misleading as an increasing in reports of sexual assault is actually positive as it means more people are coming forward to utilize resources and to report criminal activity (or go through processes). However, from a public relations perspective, this is not an easy metric to frame positively, particularly if decontextualized from the idea that more people coming forward to report is good.

University issues managers in general recognized the importance of gaining information from key publics, such as students, before launching programs or initiatives (formative assessment) as well as summative assessments of what could be improved. Additionally, students were evaluated through pre- and post-tests of the knowledge gained during presentations. However, these assessments do not really get at evaluating the level of engagement between the university and its publics, but about knowledge gained during the presentation. It is necessary to evaluate level of engagement to better understand the relationships and social capital that exists between organizations and their publics.

Greater social capital increases commitment to a community and an ability to mobilize collective actions (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004). Importantly, evaluating engagement allows issues managers to determine what types of social capital exist between organizations and publics. Putnam (2000) distinguished between two types of social capital: bridging and bonding. Bridging social capital is based on loose connections between individuals who may provide useful information and new perspectives. Bonding social capital are tightly-knit, emotionally close relationships. Understanding who publics have built these differing types of social capital with allows issues managers to determine where opportunities for dialogue exist and where more one-way communication efforts would be more effective. Furthermore, evaluating engagement allows for issues managers to better develop plans for "maintained social capital" (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007, p. 1146), which focuses on the ability to maintain valuable connections as one progresses through life changes. This would allow issues managers to better engage with student publics throughout their time at the university, as well as account for the different life stages that publics such as faculty, graduate students, and staff are in.

The less formal assessments conducted by peer educators of climate in the room, nonverbal feedback, and types of questions asked by their peers during presentations offered some of the greatest insights into engagement. Therefore, as we look at dialogue from a peer-to-peer level—which the results of this study indicate is imperative for discussing emotional and gendered topics—students, as internal publics, should also be viewed as issues managers in-and-of themselves. University issues managers who supervise student peer educators may want to invest more time in having students record their perceptions of presentations or conduct more qualitative assessments (such as focus groups) to ensure that this valuable feedback from peer educators is not lost. The idea of utilizing internal publics as issues managers is not unique to this issue or situation (Taylor, 2003). However, it does carry extra importance as one of the primary publics for managing sexual assault on college campuses is students, who often have access to other students in a way that university issues managers cannot tap into. Therefore, having peers at as issues managers, and reporting back to university issues managers, may afford a more in-depth evaluation of engagement.

As discussed in the literature review, engagement emerged as a feature of the principles of propinquity. This means that "publics are consulted in matters that influence them, and for publics, it means that they are willing and able to articulate their demands to the organization" (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 26). Therefore, more formal evaluation tools such as the campus climate surveys can be useful if including the right types of questions and going to the right people. At my home institution, the campus climate survey was not sent out to graduate students, faculty, or staff, only undergraduate students. This may be providing issues managers with an incomplete picture of issues on the campus and lacks inclusivity.

In addition to lack of inclusivity in evaluation efforts by some institutions, campus climate surveys do offer an opportunity to better understand how university issues managers can engage with emotion and gender in their engagement efforts. For example, in the AAU Campus Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct referenced by many issue managers in this study, the most common reason that people choose not to report sexual assault was because of feelings of embarrassment, shame, and not wanting to go through the emotional turmoil of reporting (AAU Campus Survey, 2016). Furthermore, such campus climate surveys also offer a chance to gain insights into communities often rendered invisible within a heteronormative society. For example, in the AAU campus climate survey, the following were listed as options for gender identity: woman, man, transgender woman, transgender man, genderqueer or gender non-conforming, questioning, decline to state, and not listed. The survey also included the following identity options: heterosexual or straight, gay or lesbian, bisexual, asexual, or questioning. This fuller expression of gender and sexual identity can provide a more accurate picture of the types of issues faced by minority groups on campus, gaining greater insight in how to address them.

Extending the Engagement Approach to Issues Management

Now that I have reflected on the data gained to answer this study's guiding research questions, I approach the revision of the engagement approach to issues management with knowledge regarding the challenges that emotional and gendered issues provide that cannot be fully accounted for in current models. Past issues management models have followed a basic structure of focusing on issue identification through environmental scanning and situation assessment, establishing goals by analyzing the issues, developing a strategy of change for the issue putting the strategy into action, and finally evaluating the results (Crable & Vibbert, 1985;

Jones & Chase, 1979). This revised model builds upon this basic structure while incorporating the ideals of an engagement approach to issues management by focusing on building relationships (Taylor et al., 2003).

Before getting into the specifics of this model, it is important to recognize the socio-political and organizational context in which issues develop (Dougall, 2008). Federal and state laws, as well as organizational policies, both guide and constrain what actions can be taken, and how issues are even articulated. The system within which an organization operates, and the laws and policies that govern it, are key. As society and organizations continue to diversify, though, it becomes increasingly important to offer a more inclusive perspective of issues management. While the focus of this study was how gender and emotion should be considered more fully in an engagement approach to issues management, the results of this study demonstrated that we cannot stop there. Even when focusing on a specific issue like sexual assault, participants noted that this issue is one that also encompasses race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and religion. This relates to Cunliffe's (2009) call for "collective organizational reflexivity," which focused on being aware of the privileging of certain groups at the expense of marginalizing others (p. 409). This type of organizational reflexivity takes into account "the relational, and therefore moral, nature of our social and organizational experiences" (Cunliffe, 2009, p. 409). Issues managers should help to ensure such organizational reflexivity is occurring as part of an inclusive issues management approach.

The success of issues management depends on the ability to identify issues of concern to a community (Hallahan, 2001). Knowing what those issues are requires an inclusive approach to issues management that works to bring together people from different parts of an organization and different backgrounds to provide a more holistic picture. This holistic perspective is

important as we know that those in positions of power, particularly in public relations, tend to be white males (Pompper & Jung, 2013). Considering this, it is not surprising that issues like sexual assault have been improperly addressed in the past and legal requirements for educating people are relatively new. While the data for this study comes from a specific exploration of sexual assault on college campuses, Figure 1 proposes a normative model for inclusive issues management that can help various kinds of organizations better manage emotional and gendered issues.

The next sections describe each aspect of the model to explain how it expands upon previous issues management approaches and how inclusion plays a role at the heart of it. I begin by explaining the revised set of issue motivators based around inclusion. Then, I focus on the connection between the issue life cycle and emotions. After laying down the core of the model, I think explore each of the five steps— (1) situation assessment, (2) goal establishment, (3) strategy of engagement, (4) implementation, and (5) evaluation —in depth.

Inclusion and issue motivators. Inclusion is at the heart of this revised model. Although diversity and inclusion have served as little more than buzzwords in various organizational contexts, the idea of inclusion is necessary to fully consider within the issues management process. Diversity often focuses on demographic differences (McGrath, Berdahl, & Arrow, 1995), with focus on recruitment, education and training, career development, and mentoring (Cox, 1993; Morrison, 1992). Inclusion, however, can be understood at the extent that people can access information and resources, be involved in groups, and can influence decision-making (Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998).

Current literature within public relations and organizational communication has focused on workplace inclusion (Mor Barak & Levin, 2001; Mor Barak, 2005). However, I believe the

idea of inclusion needs to be applied more broadly within issues management to ensure that issues of concern within organizational publics are addressed. This is so that the agendas for resolving issues are not dictated by those who have traditionally been in power, but also so that marginalized communities can have a voice (Kim & Dutta, 2009). If this mindset of inclusivity is not present in all phases of the issues management cycle, then not all issues are being fairly considered as important enough to be managed. Given the foundational role that issue motivators play in how issues are framed and articulated (Heath & Palenchar, 2009), I argue that the follow set of revised issue motivators can serve as a useful starting point to considering inclusivity in issues management.

As discussed in the literature review, Heath and Palenchar (2009) argued that there are four primary motivators: (1) security: the extent to which business practices or products are thought to pose unreasonable risks to publics; (2) equality: assessment that all persons are treated the same; (3) environmental quality: value judgment on environmental regulation; and (4) fairness: the value on the product or exchange. These issue motivators can create trouble or opportunity for organizations if key publics believe that a problem arises from the difference between what exists and what is expected (Heath & Palenchar, 2009). This study both confirmed the importance of and expanded these issue motivators when considering an emotional and gendered issue like sexual assault within a university context. Understanding how issue motivators differ for emotional and gendered issues is important for considering how to effectively manage and communicate about them to publics. I offer a revised set of issues motivators, explain their relationship to inclusion, and pose questions that issues managers can ask to better understand what may motivate certain issues among more marginalized

communities. Table 1 includes an overview of the revised issue motivators, their relationship to inclusion, and questions to consider to determine what may motivate issues at an organization.

As stated previously, Grabosky (1995) noted that "gender is the most consistent factor" (p. 2) in explaining who fears crime, and for women, there is greater concern about sexual assault. When understanding the motivation of security, it is necessary to consider the extent to which organizational practices or location pose unreasonable risks to certain person. In addition to specific organizational practices, though, there needs to be recognition of the socio-political environment outside the organization as people bring with them security concerns from outside the organization as well. Geographic location is also important to consider in terms of who may or may not feel like they have freedom of movement at the organization. Universities provide a great example of this as they are large and often require people at the organization to cross different parts of the campus. Therefore, questions to consider for security are as follows: (1) Who might feel the most unsafe at the organization? Why?; (2) What measures are in place to protect publics? Are these different for certain publics?; and (3) What resources are devoted to issues of security?

While Heath and Palenchar (2009) discussed equality and fairness within a business context, equality and fairness are key components of social justice work (O'Brien, 2011) — an important area for considerations of inclusion. Craig (2002) defined social justice as the following:

> A framework of political objectives, pursued through social, economic, environmental and political policies, based on an acceptance of difference and diversity, and informed by values concerned with: achieving fairness, and equality of outcomes and treatment; recognising the dignity and equal worth and encouraging the self-esteem of all; the

> meeting of basic needs; maximizing the reduction of inequalities in wealth, income and life chances; and the participation of all, including the most disadvantaged (p. 671-672).

Equality is the assessment that all persons have the same rights and privileges within an organization, while fairness is giving individuals the same choice and opportunities. Equality was also shaped around compliance, which makes sense from a legal perspective in that Title IX was a law enacted to provide equality within educational systems. Although some legal protections are in place to ensure equality of opportunity, these are not always adhered to and there can be subtler ways that certain groups are excluded from decision-making processes. With this in mind, the following questions can provide a starting point for issues managers to understand what issues at their university may be stemming from perception of inequalities: (1) What policies are in place to protect marginalized groups? How are these policies enforced?; (2) What is the diversity of those at the decision-making table?; and (3) How can additional perspectives be considered on this matter?

Fairness was largely shaped around the issue of reporting options and university policies for handling reports and adjudication of sexual assault that did not go through the criminal justice system. Amanda described issues of fairness being a central part of their revised compliance structure after being on the original list of 55 institutions on the Department of Education's list as the Office of Civil Rights requires "the process to be fair." Previous research has shown that attention to procedural fairness, as well as outcome fairness, is crucial for efforts to maintain or rebuild trust (Lofstedt, 2005; McComas, Besley, & Yang, 2008). The lack of institutional trust indicated by students in many instances related to distrust that the systems in place for reporting sexual assault were flawed and not adhered to the same for all people. For example, the founder of the sexual assault prevention group's main impetus in starting this group

was not feeling like the reporting process at her university was fair and favored those with the means to hire outside legal counsel. This belief that policies were not being implemented fairly led to high degrees of organizational distrust, which is antithetical to an engagement approach to issues management. Therefore, the following questions can be considered to understand fairness as an issue motivator: (1) Who may benefit unfairly from organizational practices?; and (2) Who may suffer unfairly from organizational practices?

Although Heath and Palenchar (2009) meant the issue of environmental quality in the literal sense of the natural environment, this issue motivator makes less sense in a university and nonprofit context than in an industrial corporate context. Therefore, I argue that we can add complexity to prior approaches with the addition of community values. One of the interesting findings from this study was the meaning-making process that occurred between universities and student publics in defining a localized value system. Framing the discussion around the values of the university was focused on creating a commitment to prevent sexual assault and other problematic behaviors within the university community—for example, comments from university issues managers highlighting it is not the "Wolfpack way" and other references to specific university culture. This occurred across institutions, which focused on developing these norms within university communities but often did not focus on a larger dialogue regarding societal norms.

A focus at the local level may contribute to making the issue seem more manageable, rather than trying to fix larger societal issues which may feel more overwhelming. Therefore, the following questions can be considered for community values as an issue motivator: (1) What are the community values of our organization?; (2) How do our current policies align with these

values; (3) Who may feel excluded from these community values; and (4) What happens to those who violate those community values?

Situation assessment. Having a firm understanding of the issue motivators for organizational publics is necessary for beginning the process of situation assessment. This is facilitated by viewing actively involve organizational publics as issues managers. Following the lead from Crable and Vibbert's (1985) catalytic issues management model, situation assessment requires an organization to look at both itself and its environment. This can also be considered environmental scanning, which is an information-gathering process used to more fully understand a situation (Lauzen, 1997). Part of this organizational assessment requires attention to motives (Crable & Vibbert, 1985). The questions outlined in Table 1 related to issue motivators can help issues managers catch an issue in its earliest stages. Situation assessment should also look at how issues are rhetorically constructed, and how this influences issues. However, while the prominent issues management models focus on profit and survival motives (Jones & Chase, 1979; Crable & Vibbert, 1985), this revised model of issues management works to focus on an inclusive assessment of issues within an organization. Rather than focusing on masculine, competitive notions of profit-making, this uses the motivators framed around inclusion at the heart of this model to truly understand organizational assessment. This is also where the emotional climate within and outside of an organization must be considered, as well as the emotional components of issues.

The temporal connection between the issue life cycle and emotion has yet to be fully explored in the literature, but the results from this study offer a promising start. To briefly recap, Crable and Vibbert (1985) offered a five-stage life cycle of issues: potential, imminent, current, critical, and dormant. Potential status occurs when interest in an issue is demonstrated. Imminent

status indicates that the potential of the issue is accepted more broadly. Current status means that the issue is an accepted topic of conversation or concern and often receives widespread media attention. Critical status emerges when people or groups identify with some side of the issue, making it a moment of decision. Finally, the dormant stage occurs when issues are "resolved" or have been dealt with in some way. There is a ripe opportunity to better understand the issues life cycle by considering the underlying emotional aspects to each stage. Because emotions hold together social structures and are relational (Turner & Stets, 2005), insight into the emotional basis of the issues life cycle can further help issues managers better assess and manage issues at various stages of development.

Emotions, like issues, are not static (Harlos & Pinder, 2000; Nabi & Green, 2015). We can understand why issues in the current and critical stages receive the most attention by the emotional reaction that accompanies them. Considering Jasper's (2011) argument that there has been an overemphasis on reflex emotions, I argue that such emotions characterize the current and critical stages. These emotions are often quick to appear and subside and include anger, joy, surprise, and shock, among others (Jasper, 2011). Because of this focus, emotions are seen as intense, sudden, and disruptive (Jasper, 2011). However, there is often an underlying basis to these emotions that reflects the longer-term orientation of the potential and dormant stages. In contrast to the current and critical stages, I argue that potential and dormant stages are characterized by affective loyalties and moral emotions. As defined previously, affective loyalties are attachments or aversions, such as love and hate, liking and disliking (Jasper, 2011). Moral emotions are feelings of approval and disapproval based on moral intuitions and principles, such as compassion, shame, guilt and pride (Jasper, 2011). The imminent phase offers an interesting liminal space that bridges the affective loyalties and moral emotions. Given that

emotions are a core part of action and behavior (Fineman, 2000), as well as a function of relational processes (Fineman, 2000), it makes sense the temporal turning point for both issues and emotions would occur at the imminent phase.

Understanding the progression of emotions that occurs leading up to the outrage and activism that earlier models of issues management worked to avoid can help issues managers more proactively manage issues (Heath & Palenchar, 2009). Feelings of outrage and anger often have a basis in emotions that can be recognized earlier in the process. For example, affective loyalties focus more generally on feelings of like or dislike, which can help issues managers gain an indication of overall sentiment of dormant and potential issues on campus. As issues begin to tap into and reflect moral emotions, such as guilt and compassion, issues managers can recognize the issue is transitioning to an imminent phase. If issues are then not addressed, issues managers are then faced with reflex emotions at the current and critical stages, which can become more disruptive as publics have not had the emotional basis of the issue addressed previously. Therefore, it is important for issues managers to assess the emotional climate at their organizations, which then becomes an important component of situation assessment.

Situation assessment also requires having all relevant stakeholders at the table. The types of positions requiring representation at the table will depend on the issue, but public relations and communication professionals should always be involved. Importantly, this also includes having key publics at the table who may not be organizational issues managers, but can be construed as publics issues managers as they play an important role in understanding the environment surrounding the issues and ways to reach a wider array of publics. The results of this study suggest it is necessary to have as diverse and inclusive a set of stakeholders for an issue as possible to offer the most holistic perspective on the issue. When thinking about situation

assessment through bringing together relevant stakeholders, it is necessary that this is not just based on job position as this may not provide a true representation of who is affected by the issue. This means that there needs to be opportunities for input and engagement both at a peer-to-peer level to understand issues, but also within larger departments and across institutions. Because inclusion focuses on the degree to which individuals feel a part of the organization's critical processes (Miller, 1998; Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998), it is necessary for people to be able to contribute fully and effectively to an organization. Within these contributions is also the opportunity to gain a greater diversity of perspectives and a wider variety of issues for consideration. A focus on greater collaboration between different stakeholders at an institution can provide greater input into organization policies and decision making (Kuh, 2006; Kuh et al., 2005), allowing for a more encompassing situation assessment. A more inclusive situation assessment phase can allow for the establishment of more effective goals for addressing the particular issue at hand.

Goal establishment. I argue that the next stage of this process should focus on establishing engagement goals, which requires input from both organizational issues managers and key publics. An engagement approach to issues management considers relationship building as the most ethical issues management (Taylor et al., 2003). With engagement as a primary goal of this revised issues management model, it is important to review the current primary assumptions guiding the engagement approach to issues management: (1) all organizations seek to maximize outcomes; (2) publics are a resource upon which organizations are dependent; and (3) organization-public relationships are foundational (Taylor et al., 2003).

The focus of engagement management on building relationships with publics makes it ideal for considering how to most effectively communicate about emotional and gendered issues

to audiences with diverse zones of meanings (Leitch & Motion, 2010). Within the goal establishment phase, issues managers must translate their desires for engaging with issues into goals. For this revised model of issues management, that means that issues managers should begin to define the nature of engagement. Rather on focusing on goals that center primarily on public relations image repair—which is largely reactive in response to issues (Jones & Chase, 1979)—goals should focus more on relationships between people than the outcome of a process. While changes to an organization's image can be a by-product of this process, establishing goals that allow for inclusion of issues and people into decision-making process creates a more solid foundation for sustained change.

One of the key considerations within the goal establishment phase is to balance goal possibilities against constraints (Crable & Vibbert, 1985). Past issues management frameworks have focused heavily on determining if goals are cost-justifiable (Crable & Vibbert, 1985). While this is certainly a valid constraint, current issues management frameworks do not adequately consider goals of creating positive culture change. Focusing on community values, and aligning organizational goals within this framework, can help to create more inclusive policies. The goal establishment phase allows for issues managers to define the nature of change that is needed for an organization. This allows organizations to determine if they are going to set goals based on mandated requirements for change, or to focus on going beyond what is required to effect larger organizational changes. Setting these expectations, and having opportunities for input at all levels of the organization, can help to overcome legitimacy gaps (Sethi, 1977) that can exist between organizations and publics. After progressing through goal-establishment, the next phase of the process is the strategy of engagement.

Strategy of engagement. A strategy of engagement must be based upon trust, accountability, and transparency (Burchell & Cook, 2006). This is where various approaches to dialogue can be integrated into the model as a primary strategy of engagement. Within an inclusive issues management framework, a strategy of engagement works to find ways to encourage the discussion of issues (Taylor et al., 2003). A strategy of engagement is different from the reactive and dynamic change strategies offered by Jones and Chase (1979) in that it seeks to be proactive but is not solely focused on public policy decisions. It has the most in common with the adaptive change strategy (Jones & Chase, 1979) as it does use planning as a tool to anticipate change, but rather than offering accommodation works to find a convergence between organization and public interests (Taylor et al., 2003). Finally, a strategy of engagement shares a focus on determining organizational values and being a responsible part of society with the catalytic strategy of change (Crable & Vibbert, 1985). However, rather than focusing on how the environment could be altered to the advantage of the organization, a strategy of engagement works more internally to determine how the organization can work to improve its internal and external environment. Trust is a core component of this strategy.

Sabel (1993) explained that "trust is the mutual confidence that no party in an exchange will exploit the other's vulnerability" (p. 1133). For emotional and gendered issues, building trust can be difficult as it requires a great degree of vulnerability (Bigley & Pearce, 1998). A strategy of engagement should focus on cultivating opportunities for sharing personal experiences and highlighting personal connections to an issue. The leveling of experiences helps to level the playing field between people, a necessary component of dialogue (Sommerfeldt, 2013). Oftentimes, this strategy of engagement works best at a peer-to-peer level. Creating spaces for open discussions and dialogues around issues can be important for addressing the root

causes of issues, rather than simply running an awareness campaign about the issue. Importantly, focusing on a strategy of engagement must not consist of checking off a series of boxes that the organization has done its due diligence, but instead create opportunities beyond the minimum for authentic exchanges. Strategies that have been found successful include, but are not limited to, the creation of peer dialogue groups (Foubert & Marriott, 1997) or theatre troupes (McMahon, Postmus, Warrener, & Koenick, 2014) that can cultivate a sense of vulnerability and openness for genuine engagement.

Depending on the goals for engagement established in the previous step, the strategy of engagement may include utilizing online spaces for communication. However, rather than just assuming that a social media presence is needed—particularly for emotional and gendered issues—it is necessary to consider organizational goals. If the strategy of engagement includes more of a bottom-up approach to let people organize and create communities within the larger organization, then online spaces may be an appropriate space to strategize, destigmatize issues, and gain support from likeminded people (Fraser, 1991). This bottom-up approach may help to overcome institutional constraints for what organizations can post on social media, as well as confront feelings of inauthenticity of an organization engaging with publics rather than people engaging with people.

Implementation. Because a strategy of engagement focuses on relationships, implementation of this strategy will largely be based upon relationship-building. Determining which publics to implement this strategy of engagement with should be based on previous situation assessment and focusing on the questions in Table 1 to ensure that the key publics are as inclusive as possible. When implementing messaging around a strategy of engagement, it is important to remain as inclusive as possible to show the broader impact of issues. Furthermore,

implementing programs based around dialogue—rather than one-way communication— can allow for greater engagement.

While traditional models of issues management have focused on media-oriented channels as a means of agenda-stimulation for issues (Crable & Vibbert, 1985), mass media have limitations when it comes to emotional and gendered issues. For example, mass media often utilize a conflict frame when discussing issues that exist between organizations and publics (Scheufele, 1999). This can portray the relationships that exist between organizations and publics as largely antagonistic or having mutually exclusive goals (Scheufele, 1999). Therefore, developing a strategy of engagement requires thinking of potential alternative forms of engagement to build relationships. Importantly, dialogue can and should be encouraged to encompass artistic, performative, and unconventional ways of engaging that can often incorporate emotion in ways that words alone cannot (Boyd & Van Sleete, 2009; Droogsma, 2009; Weaver, 2010). These dialogues can be implemented through the types of theater performances highlighted in this study that are integrated into outreach as a way to capture the emotions and complexity of certain issues. Additionally, large art installations or other attention-grabbing mechanisms can serve as conversation starters to more fully engage those who would not self-select to participate in a dialogue about emotional and gendered issues. These types of programs helped draw students into a conversation about emotional and gendered issues rather than overwhelming them to the point that they were not receptive to the messages.

Another way to implement a strategy of engagement is through program allies. This can also help to overcome any constraints considered in the goal establishment phase. Helping people feel more engaged with an issue can create allies that can communicate with a wider range of publics (Edwards, 2006; Poynter & Tubbs, 2008). By engaging a group of key

stakeholders in the issue and providing extra knowledge and training on an issue, these allies can then move forward to spread the message of a department and provide more of a human connection through a train-the-trainer model (e.g., Carruth et al., 2010; Orfaly et al., 2005). Particularly for the legal aspects of gendered and emotional issues, having program allies as intervening publics (Grunig & Repper, 1992) is a way to humanize the issue and create strong advocates in the organization.

In addition to broader program allies, it can also be useful for issues managers to encourage the development of more specific communities as a basis for dialogue. For example, male peer dialogue groups serve as a safe space to talk about healthy masculinity and the root causes of issues like sexual assault. Furthermore, it can also be useful to have a community of survivors to offer support and healing for those to talk about shared experiences. A focus on survivor-informed collaboration means that programs are informed by the perspectives and experiences of survivors (Gilfus et al., 1999). Depending on what is decided in the previous stages of this model, the implementation of these programs may be more grassroots-oriented or require more hands-on facilitation by issues managers depending on the issue and the particular publics involved.

A strategy of engagement can also be implemented through social media. However, social media must be approached cautiously as they can be dangerous and hostile places to discuss emotional and gendered issues, although they may also be a place to begin destigmatizing discussions. Issues managers may have certain constraints as to what they can or cannot post on social media. Anonymous platforms like Yik Yak may be a place that issues managers can participate more to work to change the cultural norms around emotional and gendered issues and tap into changing community values. Therefore, rather than an overt role in

leading the dialogue, issues managers can use social media both for implementation as well as a part of situation assessment for issues.

After implementing the strategy of engagement, it is necessary to evaluate the engagement efforts.

Evaluation. Evaluating the implementation of engagement surrounding issues can be challenging because there are fewer "objective" attributes to emotions (Jaques, 2004). Traditionally, evaluation has been utilized to compare outcomes against preset objectives in order to understand the effectiveness of a program or strategy (Fleisher & Mahaffy, 1997; Lindenmann, 1993). Although difficult to operationalize, level of engagement should be part of the evaluation process the inclusive issues management model.

Given that engagement emerged as a feature of the principle of propinquity—publics are consulted in matters that influence them (Kent & Taylor, 2002)—this is a place to begin in developing evaluative processes for engagement. Issues managers can track and evaluate the publics that have been consulted on the issue, following up with publics after the implementation phase to determine what improvements can be made to the strategy of engagement. These evaluations can be both more formal, quantitative surveys or more informal aspects of existing dialogue groups to encourage continual improvement. Because engagement emerged out of dialogic propinquity (Kent & Taylor, 2002), some suggestions for how evaluation of engagement can be operationalized is through asking how often publics are consulted in matters that influence them, the degree to which publics feel they can articulate their demands, accessibility of issues managers, and the willingness of interactants to immerse themselves in the encounter.

As engagement should be an ongoing process, evaluation should be ongoing and longitudinal evaluations should be conducted. Because emotional and gendered issues often involve a root cause of power differential and oppression, there needs to be long-term investment and planning for engagement rather than short-term fixes. Issues do not remain static, and the way that they change and evolve, as well as the way that publics do, is something that issues managers need to monitor over time in order to evaluate levels of engagement. This can provide valuable insight into how to better tailor a strategy of engagement to various publics within the institution.

Because this model of issues management is circular, evaluation should not be seen simply as the end of the process but also as the beginning. It should both help to evaluate implementation of engagement efforts, as well as lay a foundation for future situation assessments. By continually cycling through the process, issues managers can ensure a more inclusive model of issues management that regularly assess what issues need to be addressed within a community, how to engage publics on these issues, and how to ensure that this engagement is an ongoing and inclusive process.

Chapter 6—Conclusion

Using sexual assault on college campuses as a context for interrogating issues management, this study offers a normative model for inclusive issues management that can better account for the gendered and emotional dimensions of issues. Because public relations literature and research have offered little theoretical or practical guidance for how issues managers can most effectively deal with issues such as sexual assault, this study represents a promising step forward. By focusing on inclusion, this model works to have utility for an array of issues that have previously fallen outside of the dominant masculine and rationale spheres that have worked to silence marginalized publics' experiences. Through adapting previous issues management models to focus on inclusion at the heart of a strategic process, and engagement as the strategy for achieving this, this study offers a framework for ensuring more voices are heard—which enables organizations to more effectively communicate with their publics.

Implications for Theory

By focusing on inclusion, this study helps to extend an engagement approach to issues management through understanding the intersections of emotion, gender, and dialogue. The newly proposed model of inclusive issues management builds upon the foundation laid by existing issues management frameworks (Jones & Chase, 1979; Crable & Vibbert, 1985) in its cyclical and process-oriented approach to addressing issues through (1) situation assessment, (2) goal establishment, (3) strategy of engagement, (4) implementation, and (5) evaluation. It also expands the engagement approach to issues management offered by Taylor et al. (2003), which focuses more on the relationship-building between organizations and publics, to better incorporate inclusive practices to include all publics. Within this model, inclusion is

operationalized through a revised set of issues motivators that allow for better recognition of how equality, security, community values, and fairness may impact how different publics perceive issues and how to conduct more thorough situation assessment to recognize potential issues early in their development. Rather than focusing on catching issues early as a means to avoid negative publicity or reputation on behalf of the organization, this revised model has engagement as its goal to create organizational change around these issues. Thus, this model is different from the Jones and Chase (1979) model, with its primary focus on being proactive, as well as distinct from the Crable and Vibbert (1985) model, which focused on how organizations can catalyze issues. While this revised model is more in line with the engagement model proposed by Taylor et al. (2003), it more fully explicates how an inclusive environment can be created to achieve authentic engagement around emotional and gendered issues.

The incorporation of a feminist approach into this model allows for a focus on inequalities brought forth by gender and other systems of oppression, as well as the need to more fully consider emotion as part of the issues management process. If marginalized communities are not represented throughout all phases of the issues management process, then issues that are at the potential and imminent stages will not be recognized by issues managers who do not belong to those communities until it reaches the current or critical point. The addition of emotions to the issues life cycle provides an understanding of the underlying emotional basis of issues that can culminate in outrage and activism that earlier models of issues management worked to avoid (Heath & Palenchar, 2009). Therefore, it is necessary for issues managers to assess the emotional climate at their organizations, which then becomes an important component of situation assessment.

Importantly, this study directly confronts a research tradition that continues to advance the interests of dominant groups by positioning itself as value-neutral and rational (Harding, 2004). By embracing a feminist perspective on issues management, this project falls in the tradition of other feminist scholars who have offered feminist approaches to organizational communication (e.g., Buzzanell, 1994; Mumby 1996) and public relations (e.g., Aldoory, 2005; Rakow & Nastasia 2009). An inclusive approach to issues management is inherently feminist as it focuses on community and connectedness rather than competition and separation/autonomy (Buzzanell, 1994). Including emotional and gendered dimensions of issues into issues management allows the interests of non-dominant groups to be more fully considered—something I believe scholarship has a moral commitment to do. Through this process of making the invisible visible we can develop more ethically and socially aware communication practices.

Implications for Practice

By offering a revised theory of issues management based on inclusion and engagement, this project will have applicability beyond the context of universities to assist different types of organizations—such as the military, governmental organizations, large-scale nongovernmental organizations, and corporations—in communicating about gendered and emotional issues. While the development of this model was rooted in the particular issue of sexual assault on college campuses, the focus on engagement provides utility across different types of organizations and issues. By conducting a thorough situation assessment that works to understand issue motivators, issues managers are prepared to confront any issues with emotional and gendered components. Examples of other types of issues that this model could help navigate include transgender rights, the gender pay gap, harassment, reproductive, and sexual health. This approach can have utility across these broad range of issues because of its core strategy of engagement and finding issue

allies within the organization to work with. By working to foster open dialogue around sensitive issues, issues managers can help to nurture trust between organizations and publics that is necessary for communication efforts to be effective.

Understanding how gendered and emotional issues are rhetorically constructed not only has theoretical utility, but also practical utility for helping issues managers better recognize how issues are communicated by publics so that they can meet them where they are with communication. Development of this revised theory will better inform communicators how to develop more proactive communication strategies for handling sexual assault and other issues of gender-based violence and harassment through dialogue. For example, the creation of program allies and train-the-trainer initiatives can further engage stakeholders in the issue and spread key messages of the organization. This can help to provide a more personal connection to issues, as well as create stronger advocates for the organization. When developing a program ally initiative, it is important for issues managers to create a brand around the program. This is often a way to involve university communications in creating a logo and materials that will allow individuals to easily identify those who are allies and create a strong group identity. Having stickers or some sort of certificate that participants can display is one way to show involvement as a program ally. Results of this study also suggested that having some sort of t-shirt or jersey to show involvement in the program as well was effective for publicizing the program, as well as helping people to recognize who they can turn to for more information about issues related to Title IX and related issues on campus. Ultimately, those who participate in the initial training and become program allies can then help to lead future trainings, create a more self-sustaining model for the program that does not unduly burden organizational issues managers. This also can

help to create a stronger sense of shared community values as it becomes a visual indicator for support by organizational members, who then become issues managers in and of themselves.

As highlighted in the study, peer education and peer outreach programs are the most effective for encouraging dialogue, particularly amongst college-aged populations. However, there needs to be adequate accountability for participation in the programs for undergraduate populations. One constraint noted from the participant observation I this study was a tendency for undergraduate students to have a number of good ideas for reaching out and engaging with their peers, but there was often a lack of follow through on these ideas. University issues managers were often overburdened in the number of responsibilities they had in their roles, so the amount of oversight needed to help undergraduate students bring these ideas to fruition was lacking. One suggestion for issues managers to help overcome this is to have more graduate-level involvement with undergraduate student populations. Not only would this help to better engage graduate students in programs, but it also can help provide the needed accountability necessary for undergraduate students in participating in these programs. These graduate-level positions could be in the form of hourly-paid labor, or full graduate-assistantships for students. It is strongly encouraged that these be paid positions to adequately support the creation of programs and to recognize the economic realities of student populations. With a number of competing interests at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, there needs to be more incentive for full participation in these programs, either in the form of course credit (which should be awarded the semester the work is completed, not delayed) or financial compensation. If integrating learning opportunities for student involvement, it can also be helpful for peer outreach teams to partner with courses such as event planning. This can help issues managers confront the resource limitations that are often cited, as well as provide further real-world

educational opportunities for students while creating broader awareness of the issue among different groups.

Furthermore, this revised model offers guidance for issues managers who may not be part of certain marginalized communities on what types of questions to consider regarding what motivates issues. This creates more opportunities for dialogue as issues managers and publics have a greater understanding of how issues are perceived by each side. Findings from this research can help practitioners develop more inclusive communication strategies for handling gendered and emotional issues to not only avoid negative media attention but work for a larger goal of changing organizational culture.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study worked to move issues management literature forward and explored the specific context of sexual assault on college campuses, there are a number of limitations that need to be addressed. First, one of the primary limitations was the inability to conduct focus groups with students at different campuses. While the university issues managers interviewed represented a number of different types of institutions, the student perspectives were shaped by the sexual assault communication efforts of one university. These experiences are not generalizable to all student body contexts, but as the goal of qualitative research is not to generalize, the insights provided by students at this particular campus still shed valuable insight into the relationship between organizations and publics.

Furthermore, this study would have been enhanced through focus groups or interviews with non-undergraduate student publics. As discussed, faculty, graduate students, and staff at universities have different needs when it comes to sexual assault prevention and education efforts on campus. Therefore, more specific data is needed on what these needs are in order to

determine the best strategy of engagement with which to reach them. This offers a ripe opportunity for future research in this area.

Another limitation of this study, but an opportunity for future research, is a more focused approach on intersectionality. Intersectionality "emphasizes the interlocking effects of race, class, gender, and sexuality, highlighting the ways in which categories of identity and structures of inequality are mutually constituted and defy separation into discrete categories of analysis," (Dill & Kohlman, 2012, p. 154). Although this study focused most specifically on emotion and gender, the results of this study indicated that issues of race, class, and other markers of identity cannot be disaggregated from issues such as sexual assault. Public relations scholars Vardeman-Winter, Tindall, & Jiang (2013) have begun to integrate intersectionality into the idea of publics and explore the sociopolitical context of communication relationships that leads to the construction of multiple and often overlapping identities. While the normative model of inclusive issues management offered here worked to recognize these various aspects of identity that should be accounted for, more directive research should be conducted into intersectionality in the context of issues management. This can have great implications of how issues are constructed and considered, and the role that issues managers play in this process.

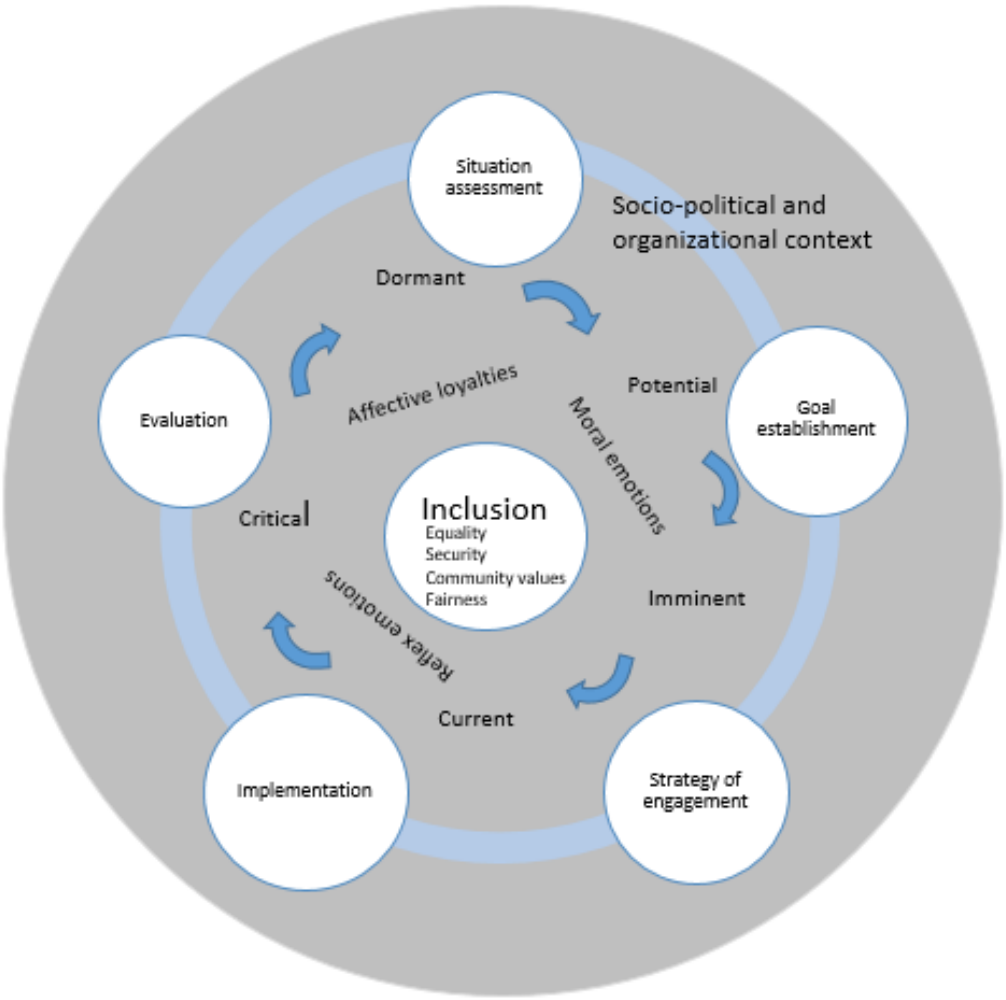
Additionally, this study was limited by only exploring the issue of sexual assault on college campuses, which provides a unique context that may not apply to all types of organizations. Further development of a normative model of inclusive issues management will require exploring this framework in multiple contexts, such as in the military and private sector organizations. Given that issues management initially arose in the corporate sector, it would be beneficial to see how this revised model works in that context or if this model is better suited for not-for-profit environments.

Finally, future research should explore issues management research in a longitudinal context. While the temporality of issues has been explored through the issue life cycle, how this manifests with publics over time has not been explored. This can be particularly interesting in a college context as issues managers have more control over seeing how opinions about issues change over four years. Given the natural temporal flow of the college environment, it can serve as a useful environment for gauging how issues evolve over time.

Table 1. Issue Motivators and Inclusion

Issue Motivator	**Relationship to Inclusion**	**Questions to Consider**
Security	The extent to which organizational practices or location pose unreasonable risks to certain persons	• Who might feel the most unsafe at the organization? • What measures are in place to protect publics? • What resources are devoted to issues of security?
Equality	Assessment that all persons have the same rights and privileges within an organization	• What policies are in place to protect marginalized groups? • What is the diversity of those at the decision-making table? • How can additional perspectives be considered on a matter?
Fairness	Giving individuals the same choices or opportunities within an organization	• Who may benefit unfairly from organizational practices? • Who may suffer unfairly from organizational practices?
Community values	Social responsibility and articulation of shared values within a community	• What are the community values of our organization? • How do our current policies align with these values? • Who may feel excluded from these community values? • What happens to those who violate those community values?

Figure 1. Normative Model of Inclusive Issues Management



Appendix A: Interview Participant Overview

Alias	Title	Department	University
Patricia	Director	Center for Women Students	A
Jade	Programming Coordinator	Center for Women Students	A
Ashley	Assistant Director	Center for Women Students	A
Lindsay	Assistant Dean for Women's and Gender Affairs	Dean of Students	B
Lauren	Assistant Director	Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance	C
Becca	Prevention Education Coordinator	Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance	C
Richard	Assistant Vice President and Dean of Students	Office of Dean of Students	D
Jessica	Coordinator for Victim Advocacy Services	Office of Advocacy Services for Interpersonal and Sexual Violence	D
Latisha	Violence Prevention Educator	CARE to Stop Violence	E
Aisha	Assistant Director	CARE to Stop Violence	E
Bethany	Assistant Coordinator	CARE to Stop Violence	E
Carl	Training Manager	Office of Civil Rights & Sexual Misconduct	E
James	Assistant Director and Special Investigator	Office of Civil Rights & Sexual Misconduct	E
Summer	Assistant Professor	College of Media & Communication	F
Trevor	Violence Prevention Health Educator	The Wellness Resource Center	G
Nicole	Assistant Dean of Students	Dean of Students	H
Nathan	Student Conduct Specialist	Department of Human Resources and Equal Opportunity	I
Harold	Assistant Director for Interpersonal Violence	Women's Center	J
Liz	Vice Provost	Division of Academic and Student Affairs	J
Katherine	Title IX Coordinator	Title IX Office	K
Carol	Assistant Dean of Students/Director of Women's Resource Center	Division of Student Life	L
Emily	Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Student Rights and Responsibilities	Dean of Students	M
Melissa	Violence Prevention and Green Dot Coordinator	Division of Student Affairs, Health & Wellness Services	N
Amanda	Title IX Coordinator	Title IX Office	O
Adam	Deputy Title IX Coordinator	Title IX Office	O
Amy	Director	Women's Center	P
Jennifer	Sexual Violence Prevention and Education Coordinator	Women's Center	Q
Nora	Assistant Director for Educational Initiatives	Office of Gender Prevention & Intervention, Women's Center	R
Jonathan	Director, Title IX Compliance	Office for Institutional Equity	R
Morgan	Director, Gender Violence and Social Change	Women's Center	S
Michael	Associate Dean of Students & Director of Judicial Affairs	Student Life	T
Jill	Public Communications Specialist	Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office	U

Appendix B: University Overview

Alias	Type	Student Population	Census Region
A	Public	47,040	Northeast
B	Public	46,416	Midwest
C	Public	48,378	Northeast
D	Private	13,061	South
E	Public	37,610	South
F	Public	35,158	South
G	Public	30, 848	South
H	Private	6,699	South
I	Public	11,093	Midwest
J	Public	33,989	South
K	Public	28,617	Northeast
L	Public	23,109	South
M	Public	21,561	South
N	Public	28,686	West
O	Public	22,791	West
P	Private	12,686	South
Q	Public	24,096	West
R	Private	15,856	South
S	Public	23,732	South
T	Private	16,674	South
U	Public	29,135	South

Appendix C: Student Participant Overview

Method	Gender	Year in School
Focus Group A	Male	Junior
	Male	Senior
	Female	Senior
	Female	Senior
	Female	Senior
	Female	Senior
	Male	Senior
	Male	Senior
Focus Group B	Female	Senior
	Female	Senior
	Female	Senior
	Female	Senior
	Female	Junior
Focus Group C	Female	Freshman
	Female	Freshman
	Female	Freshman
	Female	Freshman
Focus Group D	Female	Freshman
	Male	Freshman
	Female	Junior
	Female	Sophomore
	Female	Freshman
Focus Group E	Female	Freshman
	Female	Freshman
	Male	Freshman
Focus Group F	Female	Sophomore
	Male	Freshman
	Female	Sophomore
	Female	Freshman
	Female	Sophomore
	Female	Freshman
	Male	Junior
Individual Interviews	Female	Senior
	Female	Senior
	Female	Senior
	Female	Sophomore
	Male	Junior

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

The Issue with Issues Management: Extending the Engagement Approach to Integrate Gender and Emotion into Issues Management

Name of Participant:
Title:
Date of Interview:
Time Started:
Time Stopped:
Pre Brief:
_____Thank the informant for participating
_____Introduce the study
_____Ask interviewee to sign confidentiality agreement
_____Reconfirm audiotape permission

1. What is your occupation?

2. How long have you been in your current position?

3. How would you describe what you do?

4. What is your role in handling or communicating about sexual assault on your campus?

5. How do you define sexual assault? (RQ1a)
    a. How do you personally feel about the issue of sexual assault?

6. How does your university define sexual assault? (RQ1a)
    a. Does this definition differ from your personal definition? If so, how? If not, why not?
    b. Are there particular aspects of sexual assault that may make it difficult to define or discuss?

7. How do you think that sexual assault is perceived on your campus? (RQ1a)
    a. Have you found that recent media coverage of sexual assault on college campuses has affected perceptions of sexual assault on your campus?
    b. Do you think that perceptions of sexual assault are shared by students and administrators?

8. What role does the law play in the how issues like sexual assault are handled or communicated: (RQ2b)
    a. Has the law changed over time?
    b. Are there required training programs to keep up with any changes?
    c. In addition to the law, are there other external constraints that you face in communicating about sexual assault?

9. What plan/protocol exists at your university for handling issues of sexual assault? (RQ2a)
    a. How were these plan/protocols developed?
    b. How is this information shared with you?

10. Has the way your university handled sexual assault changed over time? (RQ1a)
    a. If so, in what ways?
    b. If not, why do you think that is?

11. Are there other departments on campus that are also responsible for handling issues like sexual assault? If so, what are they? (RQ2a)
    a. How do you communicate with these other departments?
    b. Have you experienced any challenges working with other departments?

12. What factors influence how you choose to talk about sexual assault with students? (RQ3a
    a. When does this communication occur?
    b. Are there particular groups or student populations that you target?
    c. Are students able to offer feedback on programs?

13. What channels do you use to communicate with students about sexual assault? (RQ3a)
    a. Are you using social media or online spaces to communicate with students about sexual assault?
        i. If so, why?
        ii. If not, why not?
    b. What channels have you found to be most effective?

14. What obstacles do you face in communicating about issues of sexual assault with student populations? (RQ4a)
    a. Are you able to overcome these obstacles? If so, how? If not, why not?

15. What opportunities are there in communicating about issues of sexual assault with student populations? (RQ3a)

Closing:
Are there any questions that I didn't ask that you think might be important to my research or understanding how your university manages issues of sexual assault??
Thanks for agreeing to this interview. If you would like to see a copy of my final report, let me know and I can email or mail it to you.

Appendix E: Focus Group Protocol

Disclosure Statement: *Before we start, I would like to remind you that there are no right or wrong answers in our talk today. We are interested in knowing what each of you think, so please feel free to be honest and to share your point of view, regardless of whether you agree or disagree with what you hear. It is very important that we hear all your opinions and that you share what is on your mind.*

There are going to be a few rules in today's discussion. First, there may be times when you do not want your comments repeated to people outside of this group. Please treat others in the group as you want to be treated by not telling anyone about what you hear in this discussion today. Please be careful in sharing information that you would not want others to know. And let's be respectful of each other. Before we begin our discussion, I want to ensure that everybody has read and understands the consent form I gave you when you walked in. Importantly, is everybody okay with me audio-recording our discussion today?

Let's start off by going around the room an introducing ourselves. Let's each say our name, year in school, and major. ***I'll start…*** *Now that we've gotten to know each other a little better, I'd like to go ahead and tell you more about today's study.*

The way our time is going to work today is that during our time we're going to discuss the UMD's efforts to handle the issue of sexual assault on campus. We're going to discuss your experiences with university communication outreach on these issues, your awareness of university campaigns around the topic, and your suggestions for what the university can do to better address this topic. If you choose not to participate, or to end your participation at any time, there will be no penalty to you. Are there any questions before we begin? If you no longer feel comfortable participating, I thank you for your time and you may leave now.

1. What is your understanding of the issue of sexual assault on college campuses? (RQ1b)
    a. How much of an issue do you think this is in general?
    b. How much of an issue do you think this is at the University of Maryland?
    c. How do you feel about the issue of sexual assault?

2. What communication about sexual assault have you received from the University of Maryland? (RQ3b)
    a. What did this information cover?
    b. In what format did you receive this information?
    c. When did you receive this information?
        i. Did you receive this information only once?
        ii. Have you received this information on multiple occasions?
        iii. Were you able to respond or offer feedback?

3. How do you talk about issues like sexual assault with your friends? (RQ3b)
    a. If so, why? If not, why not?
    b. Are there aspects of the issue that you think make it hard to talk about? (RQ1b)

4. Have any university officials reached out to you regarding sexual assault? (RQ3b)
    a. If so, from whom did you receive this information?
    b. If not, why do you think they have no reached out?
    c. What do you think makes it difficult for university officials to talk to students about sexual assault? (RQ4b)

5. Who or what office on campus would you go to talk about issues of sexual assault? (RQ3b/4b)
    a. Why would you choose this person or office?
    b. What might prevent you from talking to a university official about issues of sexual assault?

6. How do you think that the university could improve communication about issues of sexual assault? (RQ3b/4b)
    a. What would be the best way to reach students?
    b. Who would you like to receive information from?
    c. What type of information would you like to see covered?
    d. What do you think you need to know about issues like sexual assault that you do not?

Before we finish our discussion for today, I want to give you an opportunity to discuss anything that we haven't addressed yet that you think is important to understanding your experiences with communication about sexual assault on campus. I'd also like to thank you all for participating in today's focus group.

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