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A Long Journey to Peace: Surviving Sexual Violence at Colgate University

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Colgate University

A LONG JOURNEY TO PEACE:
Surviving Sexual Violence at Colgate University

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Professor Cristina Serna
Women's Studies Senior Thesis
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III. Abstract

Sexual violence is a common problem on college campuses, and Colgate University is no exception. While discussions about sexual violence have become more common in the past decade due to the activism of student survivors, all too often survivors' voices are left out or considered unimportant. Ignoring the experiences and testimonies of survivors leads to serious deficiencies in systems of survivor support on Colgate's campus. This thesis uses ethnographic methods to illuminate what survivorship entails at Colgate, including how survivors process trauma in community and how sexual violence affects their identity as students. It also considers the ways in which identity factors into survivorship, in what manner community members have responded to disclosures of sexual violence, and where survivors find support or not on their journey of acceptance and healing on this campus. It finds that student survivors often deal with trauma-related stress disorders that interfere with their academic functions, and need help dealing with that disadvantage. Survivors find support mainly among friends, other survivors, and the counseling center. Survivors need to be able to speak to and be supported by other people about their experiences in order to process and heal, so creating a culture in which this is common is paramount to supporting survivors. Institutional programs such as health services, the reporting process, and the Equity Grievance Panel need to be improved. Finally, sexual violence does not happen in a vacuum, and survivors' various identities impact the types of support they need. Recommendations are made for how Colgate can improve its survivor support systems.

IV. Introduction

Sexual violence on college campuses is a deep and troubling issue that plagues communities across the world. Recent protests and Title IX cases have brought the issue to the forefront of political discussions in the United States. Colgate University is no exception to the problem, and protests in the Fall 2015 semester brought renewed attention to sexual violence through a campus-wide conversation. These discussions highlighted the voices and experiences of survivors of sexual violence, and challenged both the administration and the student body to make changes in how they treat and support survivors on Colgate's campus. Survivors' voices are too often left out of the conversation about sexual violence, and ignoring their voices means such dialogue is only productive for the people having them. Our community cannot provide proper support and care if we are not sincerely listening to survivors' stories and recommendations.

The goal of this thesis is to continue the discussion on sexual violence and survivorship through highlighting survivors' voices and by listening to survivors' own accounts of their experiences on this campus. In this paper, I attempt to illuminate what survivorship entails at Colgate, including how survivors process trauma in community and how sexual violence affects their identity as students. I also consider the ways in which identity factors into survivorship, in what manner community members have responded to disclosures of sexual violence, and where survivors find support or not on their journey of acceptance and healing on this campus.

What I hope this paper does is create knowledge that informs the larger community about survivors' truths, and that these truths can stand alongside (or possibly

against, at times) the dominant knowledge frame that is built around survivors of sexual violence at Colgate. The dominant framework assumes a certain type victim, a specific situation of assault, and that a single support system that will work for every survivor. In reality, survivors have various and complicated identities, have different histories and experiences, and may need individualized types of support. However, we will not discover what specific types of support are lacking if the conversations we have about sexual violence and survivor support continue to be abstract, either through the use of dehumanizing statistics or by referencing vague hypothetical situations. It is hard on this campus to speak out about personal experience as a survivor and be listened to with respect and support, but it is absolutely necessary that those who wish to speak out be heard.

Using ethnographic methods that include participant observation, an online survey, and interviews with nine survivors, I found that a majority of survivors I have interacted with at Colgate feel the need to talk to other people about their experiences in order to understand what happened to them. This demonstrates that healing from trauma partly takes place through a collective process of meaning-making. In survivors' experience, the most supportive people tend to be good friends and other survivors. Hearing other survivors talk about their experiences allows people to realize that they are not alone, that what happened to them was not their fault and was not okay, and that someone does understand what they are going through. Events like the speak-out catalyzed more and more survivors to break the silence around sexual violence. The success of such a public event shows that survivors both need to speak about their

experiences and hear about the experiences of other survivors. Having a community to heal in and with is of the utmost importance for survivors.

Additionally, dealing with trauma makes it very difficult be a student. The time and energy it takes to deal with trauma puts survivors at a large disadvantage in a rigorous college setting, especially when they are constantly worried about running into their attacker or other triggers on campus. Survivors need support not only from their friends and other students, but from Colgate administration as well, particularly when it comes to academics. Coming up with individualized academic support for survivors might help compensate for this unfair difficulty survivors face.

Colgate University, as an institution and as a community, needs to acknowledge that sexual violence is a real problem on this campus and that hundreds of survivors here need support and space to tell their story. In part this entails administrative and policy changes, and in part cultural changes to the larger campus. None of this change will be easy, but the most important thing is to continue the conversation, to keep the space open for survivors to speak and protest, and to respect the multiple and various experiences people have.

V. Methods

A great deal of this research has been of ethnographic nature, specifically participant observation. I am a part of both the larger Colgate community, as well as groups and networks of survivors of sexual violence on this campus. I've been involved in groups such as The Network and the survivor support group at the counseling center. I have also been part of movements like Breaking the Silence and Colgate Forward, which

have researched and organized protests against campus sexual violence. Through such involvement, I have heard, witnessed, and had personal experience of how survivors are treated on this campus, both positively and negatively. However, while these experiences and observations are the motivation behind this research, and inform what I do and why, I wanted to have explicit permission from survivors to include their stories. I wanted to use their own words, which is why I took on this research project. Scholars who interview survivors and analyze narratives of sexual and domestic violence emphasize the importance of giving voice to the speaker, validating experience, bringing the private into the public, seeing the narrator as an authority and taking them at face-value (Luke 87). In addition to participant observation, I gathered data through an online survey and personal interviews with students at Colgate who have experienced sexual violence.

The online survey consisted of 52 questions, ranging from demographic information like race, gender, class year, sexuality, and nationality to basic information about the respondent's status as a survivor of sexual violence. I asked survivors to identify sources of support on Colgate's campus, if they feel safe, and how their identities impact feelings of support and safety.¹ Respondents could skip questions or exit the survey at any time. The survey link was posted on social media and was open for anyone to take. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended, but I did have a list of 22 questions that I used to guide interviews.² Interviews took place in private areas and lasted between 30-40 minutes.

I advertised for participants using social media, such as Facebook, posting on my own timeline and on group pages. I tried to get a diverse spread of pages that were made

¹ For survey questions, see Appendix 1

² For interview questions, see Appendix 2

up of Colgate students and alumni because sexual violence affects everyone. I also made cards with information on them that I handed out and placed on a display in the library about sexual violence. Finally, I reached out through networks of survivors, and the people I know from various groups told their friends who are survivors, some of whom got in touch with me. I never reached out to individuals to participate, as I thought that would be potentially harmful and disrespectful to them. I did my best to continue this care and respect for participant throughout the process, in order to not retraumatize. I think having participation be entirely self-selected meant that only those who were ready to talk about it participated, and I made sure to stress that they could take breaks or end interviews at any point. I made every survey question optional. Finally, I always had a list of resources available in case someone was retraumatized.

i. Demographics

Twenty-six individuals responded to the survey, 4 male and 22 female students. The majority of survey respondents were white, middle or high income, straight, United State Citizens, and seniors at Colgate.³ Respondents were allowed to skip questions at any point. I felt this should be allowed for the participants' comfort, however it did leave gaps in the survey data. Nine students agreed to be interviewed, all of them women, eight of them white, and all with various other self-described identities. For all of the demographic questions on the survey and in interviews, I allowed participants to self-identify rather than choose from a list because I believe it gave more a more accurate representation of identity. Even for a community of a few thousand, I had a small sample size, with 26 respondents to the survey and nine interviews. While one of my research

³ For a full breakdown of survey demographics, see Appendix 3

questions attempts to connect various identity with individual experiences of survivorship, with the limited and rather homogenous demographics, this question may remain somewhat unanswered. The results and analysis are somewhat restricted to a specific population on campus, and a population that may already receive the most attention about sexual violence.

Finally, respondents are all self-selected. While self-selection is necessary for this type of delicate research, it does limit respondents to those who are willing to share their experiences. Participants in this study are aware of what happened to them, they are willing to label it sexual violence at some level, and they most likely have some sort of social support already. These stories do not capture the experiences of survivors of sexual violence who are not receiving any type of support or who might be too afraid and uncomfortable to talk about their experiences, which is a population that definitely needs more support. This study is only a small snapshot of a very large problem, and the experiences and narratives can speak only for themselves, not for every survivor on campus. Still, it is vital that we respectfully and lovingly witness these narratives of survivorship in order to improve our support.

VI. Methodological Considerations for Conducting Research with Survivors

I approached my methodology for this paper using a relational and feminist theoretical framework. Knowledge is produced within systems and structures, and therefore only exists in relation to people, institutions, and systems. Assuming that any knowledge can exist in a void allows researchers to do harm to participants in gathering research, as well as create knowledge and ways of knowing that reinforce patriarchal and

colonial discourses. For Sprague in “The Field of Vision,” not only is “All research... organized and conducted through relationships” (27), but “all knowledge develops out of specific social contexts and sets of politically relevant interests, and... mainstream knowledge... tends to assume the position of privileged groups, helping to naturalize and sustain their privilege in the process” (2). Shawn Wilson in *Research is Ceremony*, describes relationality, or the idea that “relationships do not merely shape reality, they are reality” (7), and relational accountability, the idea that research needs to be conducted in a proper and healthy way. There are multiple standpoints and multiple truths, and they are positioned within the power structure of society. These theoretical models consider individuals’ knowledge and life experiences to be truths, valid of their own accord. Such truths are able to create theory, meaning that the methods for my research both inform and are informed by this epistemology. Both Wilson’s indigenous research model and Sprague’s feminist research model hold the creator of knowledge accountable in their relationship to the knowledge itself and to the people who they interact with it. From a feminist and decolonial perspective, it is imperative that the researcher locate his/her/hirself within the research they are doing, and that he/she/ze interrogates their purpose for doing such research. If researchers are not carefully self-reflexive and self-critical, it is very easy to recreate and normalize privilege.

While doing this research, I reflected on my positionality and purpose for this research constantly, to make sure that I was not reproducing traumatizing actions and narratives against a group of people that have already suffered. I recognize that, while I think of myself as part of the survivor community on campus, every survivor has a different experience, and individuals’ stories could be very different than my own. I am

privileged in that I am a white, able-bodied, cisgender, and middle-class American, all of which affords me some social legitimacy as a ‘rape-victim.’ My own assaults did not happen on campus, as many of my participants’ did. The place where I live, love, study, and work has not been marked permanently unsafe for me. However, it has for other survivors on this campus, the fact that anyone has to survive after trauma while being doubted and invalidated, in fear and isolation, battling guilt, anger, and pain, is completely unacceptable. Some support systems do exist at Colgate, many of which are informally created for survivors by survivors. We are powerful. We are important.

I knew coming into this research that I had an enormous responsibility to every survivor on campus by taking it on. I knew that I, as a researcher, have the power to create a space of testimony and change; but I also have power over whose story is getting told, and what is being deemed important. It was not until I started getting survey responses and conducting interviews that the weight of this responsibility hit me. I have done my best to represent people’s stories with respect and love, and with the understanding that everyone has a unique story. I want survivors’ words to stand on their own, as they have intense power, anger, and love.

I recognize that only a few voices are represented here and that individuals can only speak for their own experiences. Many voices are still missing from the conversation. Still, I think it is important that we, as a community, witness the testimonials here and continue creating and opening space for survivors to break the silence. My role as a feminist scholar is to consider and represent these stories through a particular lens, however the voices of survivors do not need my (or anyone’s) validation. As Jill Davies writes in her guide on helping sexual violence survivors, “We emphasize

that it is an individual's subjective experience that determines whether an event is or is not traumatic" (36). It is not my intent, nor the purpose of this paper to determine the "truth" to survivors' claims, or to be "equitable" to all parties.

i. Language and Terms

The language we use to discuss sexual violence shapes how we think about sexual violence and healing. One of my aims in this thesis is to shift the paradigms we use to understand and respond to sexual violence, and the language needs to reflect a non-judgmental, respectful, and intersectional lens. Therefore, I am going to briefly discuss and define the terms that I employ in this paper while highlighting how and why attention to language matters in conversations about sexual violence. My language and participants' language sometimes differs, nonetheless, I apply the terms that most closely match with my own understanding and framework of the trauma of sexual violence and survivorship. This understanding comes from my own experiences of sexual violence and research on survivor support. I use "sexual violence" rather than "sexual assault" or "rape," because sexual violence includes a much broader range of traumatic experiences that include assault and rape. Additionally, I do not question participants on the specifics of their experience, so I cannot assume that anyone's experience would fall under the legal definition of rape or assault.⁴

In referring to people who have experienced sexual violence, I use the term "survivor" rather than "victim," unless participants refer to themselves as a victim. I believe the word survivor better encompasses the agency and power that often comes with surviving sexual violence. However, there are very valid arguments for using victim

⁴ For a list of definitions of sex offenses in New York State, see <http://ypdcrime.com/penal.law/article130.htm>

as well, such as not feeling like “surviving” is an accurate word or giving weight to the fact that a survivor is indeed a victim of a crime. Most of my participants prefer to call themselves survivors, so I will continue that trend. In referring to the other party or parties involved, I use “perpetrator” or “attacker.” I do not employ the language that is used in legal proceedings, such as “complainant” or “respondent,” as it is not the role of this thesis to be fair or legal.

VII. Background

i. Sexual Violence in the United States

Sexual violence has always been a problem in the United States, but it was not until the rise of the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s and the creation of movements such as Take Back the Night that public conversation about sexual violence became public (Luke 79). Additionally, in the 1990s, conversations about sexual violence on college campuses became widespread, perhaps due to the integration of women into many colleges in the previous decades. Research around college sexual violence grew, and college-led prevention programs began to flourish (Luke 83).

Still, sexual violence continues to be a huge problem in this country. According to the RAINN website, 17.6% of women and 3% of men in the United States will be the victim of a completed or attempted sexual assault. Identity plays a large role in the likelihood of experiencing sexual violence as well as in the support systems that survivors can rely on. Black, mixed race, and American Indian/Alaskan women more likely than White women to experience sexual violence (RAINN Website). Women of low-income backgrounds are up to three times more likely to encounter sexual violence than middle-class women

(Phipps 667). Women between the ages 18-24 are 29.4% more likely to experience sexual violence than any other age group, and men ages 18-24 are 78% more likely than any other age group (RAINN website, Guerette and Carson 32). Finally, only 32% of sexual assaults are reported, and only 2% of perpetrators are convicted and sent to prison (RAINN website).

ii. Sexual Violence on College Campuses

Some research suggests that the risk of sexual violence for a woman attending college is as much as three times higher than similarly situated women in the general population (Luke 81). To complicate this statistic, college students are also much more likely to report than the general public, perhaps because of stringent reporting laws for colleges and the ability to report anonymously on many college campuses. Many colleges become co-educational only in the past 50 years, and may still retain an “old boy’s club” culture that privileges and protects wealthy white male students over other students. Much of the conversation about college sexual violence has focused on the prevalence and power of fraternities and athletic teams in colleges, both of which are very male-centered and male-dominated, reinforcing my inference that colleges support rape culture (Pape; Sanday).⁵ Several colleges also have heavy-drinking cultures, which has also been connected to higher rates of sexual violence (Luke 82). This is not to suggest that alcohol is the reason for sexual violence; only rapists are responsible for rape.

Since the 1990s, and especially in the past five years, the conversation about sexual violence on college campuses has become a national conversation, with discussions about laws such as the national Title IX of the Educational Amendments of

⁵ It is important to acknowledge here that men and gender non-binary individuals are also affected by sexual violence and to recognize that the same systems that put women at risk and silence female survivors also put people of other genders at risk and silence survivors of other genders.

1972⁶ and Jeanne Cleary Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Crime Statistics Act of 1990.⁷ On a state level, New York State’s “Enough is Enough” law was signed into effect July 7, 2015. While these laws attempt to protect students from sexual violence and support survivors of sexual violence, they have not done enough, as evidenced by protests at colleges and universities across the country.

One of the most well known of these protests is Emma Sulkowicz’s “Mattress Performance,” also known as “Carry the Weight,” which sparked a national debate about how to serve justice to survivors on college and university campuses (Kaplan, *The Washington Post*). Several other protests about universities’ poor responses to sexual violence have happened at colleges across the country. Additionally, Title IX complaints have been taken against nearly one hundred colleges and universities across the United States for the mishandling of sexual violence cases.⁸

iii. Sexual Violence at Colgate University

Colgate University struggles with sexual violence and survivor support. Most of the university’s focus in the conversation about sexual violence has been on prevention and education, such as Yes Means Yes and Bystander Intervention, two successful student-led programs. However, the support for people who have already experienced sexual violence is lacking at Colgate, as demonstrated by recent statistics. Colgate took part in the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Consortium’s Sexual Assault Campus Climate Survey in 2015, and had 715 responses. The results of the HEDS survey showed that students do not feel particularly supported by the administration, faculty, or student

⁶ For more information, see http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html

⁷ For more information, see <http://clerycenter.org/summary-jeanne-clery-act>

⁸ A full list can be found here: <http://thinkprogress.org/health/2015/01/13/3610865/title-ix-investigations/>

body at Colgate. When students were asked if they were confident that campus officials would handle a crisis well, only 35.2% of students responded positively (Colgate University HEDS Data, 2015). The HEDS data showed that students were generally well aware of reporting procedures and support services.

The HEDS data also overviewed sexual violence on campus. Eighty-five of 715 students answered yes to question if they had been sexually assaulted during their time at Colgate. An additional 40 students answered that they suspect they may have sexually assaulted, but they were uncertain. While these 40 additional students were not included in subsequent questions about their experience of sexual violence, for the purposes of this paper, they will be included in the total number of students who have experienced sexual violence according to the HEDS data.⁹ Seven students officially reported forcible sex offences to Colgate in 2013 and 14 in 2014 (Colgate University, Annual Security Report). Comparing the numbers of reported sexual assaults with the number of people who said they were assaulted in the HEDS data shows that the numbers of sexual assaults that actually happen on campus are much greater than what is reported. Though the number of reported sexual assaults doubled in between 2013 and 2014, 14 reports compared to 125 actual cases is a huge disparity.

Records of sexual misconduct are used for legal public reporting purposes, and individual cases might be taken to the Equity Grievances Panel or EGP. This process is meant to be fair and equitable to all parties involved, and is controlled closely by the

⁹ I am including them in the total count because so many participants reported that they were unsure if what happened to them was wrong until they talked to other survivors. Not including them in the data typifies the framework Colgate works from.

state.¹⁰ While reporting and justice processes are important, they do not necessarily constitute survivor support. With the school's focus on prevention and education, and with the number of unreported cases of sexual violence, survivors may often have to go without institutional support on Colgate's campus, such as help feeling safe or help managing academics.

There are places to find emotional, physical, and social support on campus. The University Health Center can offer some physical support to survivors by providing emergency contraception and STI testing. Campus Safety in some ways offers physical safety by offering rides to those who feel unsafe. Emotional and social support overlap quite a bit, but I would describe the Counseling Center and the Chaplains Offices as providing emotional, psychological, and spiritual care. The Center for Women's Studies and The Network tend to provide safe social places for survivors. Groups that are not officially recognized by the University, such as Breaking the Silence, Colgate Forward, and the Association of Critical Collegians offer both some social support and the ability to be an activist. Finally, an underground network of survivors provides many with love, care, understanding, and information.

VIII. Results

In order to understand the responses and experiences of survivors at Colgate, it is important to understand common physical and psychological responses to the trauma of sexual violence. Additionally, it is imperative to understand that sexual violence and rape culture are normalized and upheld by a particularly gendered system of power. Violence

¹⁰ For more information on EGP, see: <http://www.colgate.edu/offices-and-services/deanofthecollege/biassexualmisconductresources/equitygrievanceprocess>

of this nature - traumatic violence - can lead to a ruptured sense of self. Sexual violence and the traumatic rupture of self can have real, lasting, and intense effects on the daily lives of survivors, and can get in the way of day-to-day activities, such as school. Healing from sexual violence often feels like putting the pieces of one's self back together, and to do that, you need the long-term love and support of others. The results from the 26 surveys and nine interviews show that, similar to the literature, survivors at Colgate need to talk about their experience/s of sexual violence with supportive others in order to understand and put words to what happened. This section draws on the interviews and surveys of survivors on campus, as well as on academic literature and recommendations from professionals in survivor and trauma support services. I believe that it is the responsibility of Colgate, both as an institution and as a community, to provide the respectful and safe space for these conversations to happen, and through listening to these conversations and hearing what survivors need, make continuous improvements to our survivor support systems.

i. Understanding the Generalities of Survivor Support

People seem generally aware of support services at Colgate, with 23/24 surveys answering that they were at least somewhat aware of where to go for support. The counseling center was by far the most utilized resource; still 8/24 respondents report that they never or rarely use it. The Women's Studies Center was the second most used resource, but only 9/24 respondents ever reported using it, even rarely. Only a few survivors used The Network and the Chaplains' Office. However, sororities also seemed to be a source of support for a few women, and one survey respondent mentioned Lambda as a support network. The greatest measure of support survivors received came

from their friends and from other survivors. Faculty and administrators came out as only slightly supportive.¹¹

ii. Understanding Physiological Impacts of Sexual Violence Trauma on College Students

Everyone's experience of sexual violence is different, and every survivor has a different journey of healing. Assuming that one experience or response is universal is harmful to individual survivors and their unique experiences. However, there are definitely links and similarities between many survivors' responses, psychologically and emotionally, and exploring these similarities can give insight into support systems survivors might generally need. Common immediate responses to sexual trauma are guilt, anger, heightened distrust of others, sadness, depression, isolation, low self-esteem, and feeling dirty (Guerette and Caron, 2007, 43). These responses and feelings are repeated in personal narratives of sexual trauma in the interviews I conducted. One survivor mentioned showering for hours after being attacked because she felt so dirty, and others reported blaming themselves for what happened or for feeling victimized after an attack (Interview #1, Interview #7, Interview #8). The shame, fear, isolation, and anger that many survivors of sexual violence may face impact how they live day-to-day, and can impede their success in a high-stress college environment.

Trauma can cause changes in survivors' brains that influence their lives in many ways. These changes can affect memory and emotion, and "traumatic symptoms have a tendency to become disconnected from their source and to take a life of their own" (Davies 2007, 36). Surviving sexual violence can cause a range of responses that others may find strange or inappropriate. Post-traumatic stress disorder is common among

¹¹ For a breakdown of survey responses, see Appendix 4

survivors of sexual violence, and many respondents in my research had symptoms of PTSD (Dunleavy and Slowick 2012; Amir 1998). People with PTSD show deactivation in the part of the brain that controls emotion, memory, and language, which results in “excessive and non-volitional emotional over activity in response to trauma-related stimuli, along with transient psychological disengagement” (Dunleavy and Slowick 340). Survivors often refer to “triggers,” or “trauma-related stimuli,” which could be people, locations, smells, sounds, or anything that somehow reminds them of their traumatic event. In response to a trigger, survivors might become extremely emotional and agitated, and may disassociate (“transient psychological disengagement”), or lose connection and attachment with the present and the self.

In interviews, Colgate survivors often mentioned episodes of being triggered, and how triggers could send them into a panic attack that might take hours to reconcile. For example, one survivor mentioned a YikYak post that made victim-blaming comments, which triggered her and sent her into a panic attack (Interview #4). Besides victim-blaming comments, things that tended to trigger survivors was seeing their attacker, being near or certain locations on campus, and dealing with certain administrators and community members. The respondents who were attacked at Colgate have to survive every day with constantly being aware that certain people or places could trigger them and cause them to go into a panic attack and/or disassociate, which can take a lot of time and energy to overcome.¹²

Another survivor, who had been diagnosed with PTSD, struggled almost daily with physical disassociation after her assault: “How do you feel comfortable in your own

¹² 24/26 of survey respondents and 8/9 interview respondents were attacked on Colgate’s campus

skin? Because I constantly feel disassociated from my own body” (Interview #7). Even common coping mechanisms for disassociation tended not to help this person feel ownership of her body. The very bodily nature of sexual violence can complicate healing; you cannot escape your body, even though it may be a trigger and a reminder each and every day of your trauma (Brison 44). Having your own body as a constant reminder, as well as continuing to live and work in a place that may be full of triggers, makes survival a constant process for many survivors at Colgate.

PTSD can have serious effects on focus, memory, and thus academics: “Individuals with PTSD also have problems with sustained attention and working memory,” (Dunleavy and Slowick 340), which is especially relevant for survivors who are also attending college, and depend on focused attention and working memory to pass classes, especially with the rigorous academic standards at Colgate. Six of the nine interviewees expressed the profound difficulty they had dealing with the emotional impact of trauma as well as trying to keep up their grades in a high-stress college setting. Two seniors were unable to finish their senior theses because of the time and energy they spent dealing with the trauma of sexual violence (Interview #1, Interview #7). Not only does surviving have a huge impact on academics, but also the drop in grades can feed into the self-blame that survivors often have to deal with.

Second semester after the assault, I found it really hard to focus. I started having panic attacks, and I just blamed it on myself. Like, I’m actually not ready to be here [at Colgate]. I’m not as smart as I thought I was. And so it turned into a lot of self-hatred. I would just sit down and try to get through a reading, and not be able to do it for whatever reason, and I’d get pissed at myself and go to bed and wake up angry. And it was just like a cycle because I wasn’t getting things done. That continues from time to time. But I’ve gotten better at knowing its not because I’m stupid. (Interview #6)

This particular survivor showed many signs of PTSD, including panic attacks, and difficulty with sustained attention and memory, and aptly describes how trauma can become a cycle of self-blame and self-hatred that can seriously limit important parts of people's lives. For college students trying to succeed in a very difficult educational setting, also dealing with PTSD places them at an unfair academic disadvantage.

With this knowledge, it is particularly urgent for professors and administrative deans to work with survivors to come up with an academic plan and support methods, and to remember that healing from sexual violence is not a linear process. While survey results show that professors appear to be generally supportive, one survivor explained, "I think it's hard for [professors] when it does affect your academics. Because they're like, that's really hard, but at the same time, you need to get this done. And you're like, you don't understand, I'm trying to do this and I'm giving it 110 percent, but sometimes that's just not enough" (Interview #1). Even if professors are sympathetic, survivors may need a more administrative and long-term support plan than individual professors are able to provide. Having semester- or year-long academic plans might help survivors who are struggling to keep up their grades while dealing with trauma.¹³

iii. Barriers to Disclosing Experiences of Sexual Violence

Telling other people about an experience of sexual violence can be extremely frightening for survivors. In addition to the guilt, anger, isolation, and depression survivors might feel, there are many potential barriers to disclosing an attack. Some common barriers include not recognizing an attack as non-consensual, lack of education about post-attack options and services, not wanting to acknowledge or deal with it, lack

¹³ For more quotes on academics, see Appendix 5.1

of proof, how close the perpetrator and survivor were before the attack, not wanting family members to know, fear of retribution by the assailant, and previous negative responses to disclosure. Indeed, many interviewees talked about how they did not recognize their attacks as something wrong, for various reasons. A rather disturbing lack of education can lead to survivors not getting the resources they need.

It sounds bad, but I wasn't even educated on sexual assault or rape or anything, so I was kind of confused about what happened and what to call it... None of us really knew what to call it, so we didn't really do anything about, we actually were just kind of embarrassed by it and chose not to tell people or talk about it. (Interview #8)

Without education on positive consent, sexual violence, assault, or rape, people are more likely to ignore it or doubt and blame themselves and not tell anyone about their experience. This quote points to the importance of positive consent sex education for every student on campus. No person should be left wondering and confused like this survivor was.

Another barrier to disclosing an experience of sexual violence is a culture silence around the issue. Publically claiming survivorship is still difficult, awkward, and taboo, even though it can be important for survivors as well as the community. Even close friends may not disclose to one another, as in one interviewee's case: "I just wish there was a culture of being able to talk about things. Like it's crazy that my friends and I didn't know that we were survivors. That's probably a me problem or a them problem, but it's also a culture problem" (Interview #6). This woman had two friends who were also survivors, but they did not talk with one another until her friends had to leave campus due to their experiences.

Additionally, there were many calls for male Colgate students to be a part of these conversations more often: "I would make the discussion far more prevalent among male

students at Colgate. This primarily includes fraternities, but also unaffiliated male students as well” (Survey #16). This dialogue needs to happen everywhere on campus, as sexual violence is a problem everywhere on campus. Creating a culture where it is acceptable to publically claim identity as a survivor and to talk about one’s experience is paramount to improving support for survivors of all identities on Colgate’s campus.

Despite these barriers, every interviewee and all but one survey respondent had told at least one other person about her/his/hir experiences. These results may show that many survivors have at least one person supporting them, or it may be a limitation in that only survivors who are already receiving some type of support were involved in the study. Nevertheless, the response when one publically claims a survivor identity needs to be positive and supportive, not victim-blaming or doubting.¹⁴

iv. Improving the Response to Disclosures of Sexual Violence

Revealing an attack has the potential to either be very helpful or very harmful to a survivor, so apprehension is well founded: “While friends of a rape victim/survivor have great potential to aid in the recovery process, they also have the possibility of making her [him/hir] feel much worse” (Guerette and Caron 34). How people respond can have a huge impact on how the healing process for survivors unfolds. Survivors both in the literature and in this study found that good, positive responses to their disclosure of sexual violence helped them feel empowered, less isolated, and validated (Guerette and Caron 39). It seems that the most important response is that of unconditional belief in what the survivor is disclosing, followed closely by supporting the decisions that survivors want to make for themselves and not pressing for details: “It’s been really

¹⁴ For more quotes on barriers to disclosing, see Appendix 5.2

helpful when someone believed me and didn't ask details about it" (Interview #7).

Pressing a survivor for details is inappropriate in most situations. Trauma experts suggest that the primary consideration when working with survivors is facilitating feelings of safety and control for the survivor, which is what this survivor wants from the people she tells (Dunleavy and Slowick 341).

It is also important to recognize that this support needs to be consistent over time, and not just in the weeks following an attack. Healing and processing trauma takes years, so one survivor said her friends need to be "like 'I'm willing to talk to you about it like whenever,' so like when I have like bad days knowing that those friends are there for me to be like okay, 'I'm having a bad day, help me.' And being open to that communication" (Interview #1). This survivor expresses the helpful long-term care and understanding that she received from her friends. Another survivor remarked how her friends were very supportive for about two weeks and then expected her to be back to her old self, which made her feel discouraged (Interview #3). Positive, long-term support from friends can help survivors open up to more people, and can help combat the feelings of guilt, isolation, and self-doubt that so many survivors feel.¹⁵

While positive responses can be invaluable in a survivor's healing process, negative responses can cause real and lasting harm to someone who has already lived through a traumatic experience. The most common negative response survivors at Colgate received was one of doubt, disbelief, or questioning the story: "I've had people like debate whether or not it was rape, which probably makes me question it too" (Interview #2). Other bad responses included making light of an experience of sexual

¹⁵ For more quotes on positive responses, see Appendix 5.3

violence, such as making jokes (Interview #8). Responses like doubt, questioning, or victim-blaming can cause survivors to doubt themselves, to feel more ashamed and guilty, and can set back or stop their healing process, like with this particular person who told her perpetrator: “he first said that I was lying, that he didn’t believe me and he wouldn’t do that. And then he said it was my fault. So I just repressed all of that, and I didn’t do anything for a while. I didn’t tell anyone” (Interview #4). Negative responses to a disclosure of sexual violence can leave survivors without support, and at higher risk for PTSD and of sexual revictimization (Luke 98).

Why is it important for survivors to tell their story to others? First, trauma complicates memory, and “the manner in which the traumatic memory is represented in memory has a bearing on recovery... emotional processing involves organizing these memories,” representing them and articulating them (Amir 391). Telling the story of one’s trauma helps create a more coherent memory of what happened, which may help survivors understand and process their emotions. It is important to receive positive affirmation from others because sexual violence is a trauma that might not only shatter a sense of self, but also connection and trust with others. However, creating a narrative not only helps survivors process memory and emotion, but a positive response “also reintegrates the survivor into a community, reestablishing bonds of trust and faith in others” (Brison x, xi). A negative response can continue to break one’s sense of self and connection with others. As one interviewee said:

I think so many people right after it made me feel crazy like I was overreacting, like there’s always that doubt that you maybe made this up. They just have such a power over you to make you not sure that this happened to you, and I think a lot of my friends and the school reinforced that in me. (Interview #3)

If the communicative act is cut off before it can start, or if other's responses continue to disrupt a sense of self, or push survivors out of a community, the effects are traumatic and lasting.^{16 17}

Colgate not only needs a culture wherein it is acceptable to label one's self a survivor and talk about experiences of sexual violence, but it also needs a culture that unquestioningly accepts these stories and experiences, an "environment where perpetrators are held accountable and victims are not blamed" (Survey #18). All students, as well as faculty, staff, and administrators need to be trained on how to respond when someone discloses an experience of sexual violence, how trauma can affect people, and how to be supportive. One survivor wished "that my friends were more aware of how to respond to both me and the person who committed the sexual violence" (Survey #13). Many people might not know how to respond to a story of sexual violence, even if they want to be supportive, so conducting even a short training for all students would be beneficial.

v. The Benefits to Creating a Community of Survivors

While the survey results show that friends are often where survivors find the most support, something that came up in interviews was how beneficial it is for survivors to connect with and talk to other survivors. While friends can be and often are important support systems, almost every interviewee mentioned an "unspoken vibe" with other survivors: "I think that's the most helpful because its like 'I get you without having to say

¹⁶ I think it is also important to mention here that one interviewee stated that other than telling her closest friend, talking about her experience has not been particularly helpful for her. She usually only does so if she believes it will help another person, though she did also think her disinclination was because of an internal reluctance to let sexual violence change her identity (Interview #2). I think this goes to show the multiple and various healing journeys that survivors take.

¹⁷ For more quotes on negative responses, see Appendix 5.4

anything” (Interview #9). One person said it was only after talking to other survivors that she stopped feeling crazy about her attack (Interview #3). At least three interviewees mentioned how surviving is something you do every single day, and that there are some good days and some bad days, and that other survivors understand that.

Coming to terms with what happened is such a constant process of accepting it as rape or as an assault. And so people who understand that that's a process have been helpful moving forward. Because I feel like sometimes on campus, attached to the term survivor is the idea that you need to have such a positive outlook all the time and move with it and carry this thing with you and become a stronger person. But that's not feasible all the time. So people who give me space to have good days and bad days. (Interview #6)

This quote exemplifies the struggle that survivors can face every day to be strong, to actually be a ‘survivor.’ People who experience similar struggles day-to-day are more likely to inherently understand that everyday is not going to be easy, and that is okay.

Connecting with other survivors can also help one put one’s own experience into perspective. As Brison found, people in survivor support groups are often able to get angry on their own behalf by first getting angry for other survivors (63). I found that to be the case in my own involvement in a survivor support group, where hearing other survivors’ stories and supporting and loving others allowed me to examine my own experience in a more caring and accepting manner. While survivors at Colgate are generally good at creating underground networks of support, having institutional support like this counseling group has been incredibly helpful on my own healing journey, and I think for the other group members as well. However, the group maxed out at ten members, and there is currently a waiting list to be a part of it. Colgate needs to provide

more resources to the counseling center to have more of these groups and be sure that every survivor has the chance to make these connections in a safe space.¹⁸

In addition to institutional connections, the informal network of survivors needs a place to grow and flourish. In the interviews, many survivors mentioned how speak-outs, particularly the protest around Women's Studies and survivor speak-out that were held in the Fall 2015 semester, helped them feel safer, more connected, better able to understand and talk about their experience, and more aware of the frequency of sexual violence on this campus. Being part of an unfortunately large community of survivors can give individuals more strength and ability to be open and public.

To have the forum, to have people speak out and do that was incredibly strengthening. And I think gave me a little bit more of the push I needed to be more open about like, no this happened to me too. To see my friends and all these people that I admire be strong enough to do that, I really think has given me a little more of a push to be more open about my status as a survivor. (Interview #1)

The power and connection in a speak-out can make individuals feel safer and better able to be open about their own stories, more likely to reach out to others and create these significant relationships, and more likely to feel validated and accepted with their own identities and stories. Not only do open public events like speak-outs benefit survivors, but they also tend to create conversations about sexual violence in the larger campus community. Such discussion gives more community members to learn how prevalent sexual violence is and how to deal with in their own lives. I am uncertain it is the place of the institution to arrange public forums like a speak-out, but it is essential that the Colgate administration be willing to support and work with students who want to organize them.¹⁹

¹⁸ For more quotes on survivor networks, see Appendix 5.5

¹⁹ For more quotes on speak-outs, see Appendix 5.6

vi. Improving Health Care for Survivors

It is important for survivors of sexual violence to get health care after they are attacked, and emergency departments or health centers are often the first places survivors seek care. Access to properly trained medical personnel is vital for both physical and psychological health of survivors (Plichta, et.al. 286). Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE nurses) are specially trained to conduct examinations and provide care post-attack. These providers can make sure there is no life-threatening trauma, can document and save evidence for legal action, and can provide emergency contraception and prophylaxis for STDs like HIV. According to Plichta, et.al., SANE nurses were found to provide better care to survivors than nurses not trained for post-trauma care (286). Survivors need reliable access to SANE nurses for their health and safety, and for the collection of evidence should they decide to report to a legal institution. Colgate Health Services does not currently offer SANE services, nor does Community Memorial Hospital in Hamilton. The closest SANE services are almost a half hour away by car, leaving survivors of a very recent sexual trauma with the responsibility of finding a ride. None of the interview respondents sought medical attention from a SANE nurse directly after their attack, although some went to the Colgate Health Center and some sought out a SANE nurse weeks later. Those who went to the Health Center soon after did so to get emergency contraception, or because they had experienced serious physical trauma.

Survivors may be less likely to seek medical care after an attack if the emergency department is ill-equipped to serve them, and the general perception of the Colgate Health Services is that they could be more discreet and caring when handling cases of sexual violence. (Plichta, et.al. 287; Survey #18; Interview #1; Interview #5). For the

health and safety of survivors, adequate health resources such as SANE nurses need to be in place for students, and these resources need to be properly advertised and well-known. The Colgate administration currently has a plan to pay for the training of ten SANE nurses to serve the region, including Colgate, which is a step in the right direction. The decision to fund SANE nurses was in large part due to the action of student survivors advocating for themselves and their fellow survivors on campus.

vii. Challenges of Reporting to Collegiate and Legal Institutions

A survivor's decision to officially report an experience of sexual violence is a very personal one, and while it hopefully ends with the survivor feeling more empowered and safe, often times that is not the case. When survivors report to institutions, they are taking a risk, and the receiving agency needs to respect survivors and their stories. Of the 26 survey respondents, only eight reported their attacks to the university, and of those eight, only two went through an EGP case. In the interviews, five women reported, and three went through EGP. Those who did not report decided not to because they did not know enough about how to report or about the EGP process or because they had heard negative accounts. Despite recent efforts to educate the campus about reporting and EGP, there are still uncertainties: "I still feel like there are so many secrets about it... I still feel like I don't know what I need to know about EGP. They need to do a better job of being transparent, and I think being supportive" (Interview #8). Students need very clear information about how to report and EGP and they need to be respected in the process of reporting if they choose to do so.

Being respectful while taking reports includes remaining non-judgmental while taking reports, giving survivors clear and honest information about how the process

might go, and explaining the agency's limitations. Survivors need to know "how participating in the process might affect them. They also need to know what options or choices they have, what decisions they can make, and what decisions will be made by others" (Davies 45). The responding agency should not make any promises about outcomes, nor pressure survivors into doing more than they are comfortable with.

Unfortunately, many respondents recounted how they felt pressured by friends, faculty, and administrators to report further than they wanted to and go through EGP, and how they were promised good outcomes if they did (Survey #20).

I kind of just wanted them to know that this happened because I knew that it wasn't ok. I didn't want to go through with it, didn't want to do anything about it, just wanted them to know this was happening. That's about as far as I had decided, and they made me go through everything. They promised a lot of stuff to me. (Interview #3)

That anyone felt pressured to go through a reporting process is unacceptable because as stated earlier, one of the most important parts of supporting survivors is allowing them to decide what course of action they want to take and to respect those decisions. Pressuring a survivor into any course of action can add to the loss of power and agency that one faces after sexual violence, can lead to distrust of the receiving agency, and should not be the experience of any reporting process.

Of the five women who decided or were forced to go through EGP, none of them felt that the EGP was successful or felt supported throughout the process. The process itself is not necessarily designed to be a measure of support for survivors; it is a legal, judicial and institutional process, but the experience of survivors in EGP shows that it is more distressing and painful than it needs to be.

I have yet to experience something that is equally as traumatizing, robbing of your sanity, something that eats away at you...There's reliving it in like nightmares, but when those happen, you're by yourself, you're alone, or you're with someone you can

trust, and you can kind of work through it. When this is a hearing and an investigation, it's your everyday. You can't escape. (Interview #5)

This quote exemplifies the complicated nature of EGP. Again, while this process has the potential to bring some measure of justice to survivors of sexual violence, it often does not, and instead traps and retraumatizes survivors who repeatedly have to relive their experience to people who may not be supportive. It is beyond the scope of this paper to suggest changes to EGP itself, as it is so tied up in state and national laws. However, the information and support provided to everyone going through this process needs to improve if Colgate University wants the perception of EGP to recover.

It is also complicated to suggest that administrators provide better support. On the survey, administrators definitely scored the lowest on perceptions of survivor support, with only two survivors reporting that they often or always felt supported by the administration. It is difficult to tell entirely if this is due to a lack of interaction with administrators, if it is due to the structure of the institution, or if it is due to the administrators themselves. One interviewee seemed to think it was because of the bureaucracy and lack of personal connection in reporting: “The administration is so administration-y that everything has to be paperwork and rules. You can't change emotion or feeling through paperwork, you need empathizing and support” (Interview #2). Others felt that they were being manipulated throughout the process (Interview #8). One interviewee did have very positive interactions with administrators, and was thankful for their help (Interview #7). The changes administrators need to make may be regularly checking in with survivors, being very honest about the EGP process, and receiving proper and recurring training on how to talk to individuals dealing with trauma.

It is hard to feel care and compassion through the rules that EGP has to follow, so it is especially important for individual administrators to be supportive, yet even this does not always translate to institutional support. One survivor felt that the decision in her case negated the support she got individually: “On an individual level, everyone has been so great... but then you get to the higher level, and you have someone who is admitting to being a sexual predator, and you’re giving him a warning. I don’t understand the thought process behind that” (Interview #4). Again, a thorough reassessment of the EGP process might provide some ideas on how to create a judicial process that achieves justice and is not traumatizing for survivors of trauma.²⁰

viii. Disrupting the Myth of a “Credible Victim”

Survivors’ perceived credibility might be the most important factor in both judicial investigations and in community support, and this credibility is too often based on the “rape myth.” A rape myth is “a series of over simplified and rigid schemas that center on the perpetrator, the rape act, and the victim” (Schuller, et. al. 761). Victims are supposed to have a certain story, have particular identities, and react to their trauma in a socially acceptable manner. When survivors almost invariably do not fit into the rape myth, they are discredited. One interviewee explained how this social judgment happens at Colgate:

Something that I’ve found throughout the student body as a problem is people kind of rating those sexual assaults. So people, whether or not it was violent, and whether or not it was penetrative, and whether or not it was heterosexual, and all of those things, and how if it doesn’t fit into your classic interpretation of what a rape should be, then it invalidating that person’s experience. Which is so incredibly ridiculous. (Interview #1)

²⁰ For more quotes on EGP and administrative support, see Appendix 5.7

The idea of ranking experiences came up in other interviews and illustrates how the rape myth and narratives of credibility can affect how survivors are treated by other students and by the administration. Recognizing internal bias requires training, so if people are not trained to know the various responses to trauma, and if the survivor's narrative does not match the rape myth, people "will question the validity of the sexual assault, judge the victim with greater skepticism, and blame her [him/hir] more" (Schuller, et. al. 763). Identity is very important in social credibility, as low-income people, people of color, disabled people, queer people, and men all may not fit properly into this rape myth, and therefore will be less likely to receive belief and justice.

ix. Sexual Violence as a Social Phenomenon

The problem of sexual violence is not just an individual one. Sexual violence and rape culture are structural, social, cultural, and political issues. On college campuses, the entrenchment of rape culture is not only at play in the student body but also in the administration and the entire structure of education (Luke 84). Everyone has various intersectional identities, and we all internalize stereotypes about our own and other's identities, which affects how we experience sexual violence and survivor support. Because the survey respondents were not diverse, questions about identity, support, and safety were not particularly illuminating. The identity that had the biggest impact on feelings of support and safety was gender (unsurprisingly). Family income had the second biggest impact on feelings of support, and sexuality had the second biggest influence on feelings of safety. The interviews provided more insight on how identity plays into survivor support at Colgate.

Gender socialization plays a big part in reproducing rape culture, and this shows in the results. We are taught that men are strong and aggressive and women are not, which is harmful to people of all genders and gender presentations. This socialization causes us to believe that men cannot be sexually assaulted and that women cannot be attackers. It also entirely ignores non-binary people. Female-identifying survivors are left blaming themselves for not staying safe and protecting themselves from aggressive men and reported that their gender identity made them feel less safe on campus. Male-identified survivors are left out of too many of these conversations, as one survey respondent illustrated: “I often feel over looked [sic] or unacknowledged as a well-off white male of prevailing sexual orientation... I would suggest that men’s issues are too often disregarded” (Survey #19). It is also significant that no male survivors reached out for an interview, possibly indicating they lack of ability they have to talk about their experiences. Not only are male survivors left out of conversations and supports on campus, it is very difficult to find literature about the experience of adult male survivors. People of all gender identities must be intentionally included in conversations and training about sexual violence, as it can and does happen to people of all gender identities on this campus.

Queer women were another group that felt particularly unsafe and unsupported on campus due to their identity. Queer women often face homo/biphobia and sexism as well as a stigma as survivors, and may need queer-specific resources. One interviewee mentioned that her queer identity made her more hesitant to tell people.

I guess it [queer identity] makes me more nervous to tell people, because when you’re a woman and you’re not straight, there is just like this notion that some man did something wrong to you, and that’s why you like women. And that’s not the reason I

do, obviously. So it just makes me more cautious about what parts of my identity I let people know about. (Interview #4)

Another woman, who identified as pansexual, said that people think she is more sexually loose because of her queer identity, which might make them doubt her validity as a survivor (Interview #1). The way that female, queer, and survivor identities interact in the gaze of society can make individuals less safe, less comfortable, and less supported (something I personally can attest to as well).

Being a female athlete on campus and a survivor seemed to bring its own complications as well. Three interview participants were involved in athletics and mentioned the entrenched power structure that places male athletes and men's teams over women's teams: "Just being an athlete, I think a female athlete, that's like one of the main reasons I didn't report. They were male athletes, and male athletes are just treated better" (Interview #8). Female athletes seemed less likely to report, because of the perception that administration will support male athletes over them, and because of the social power men's athletic teams have on campus. These respondents also mentioned that they generally do not want their own status or the names of their perpetrators known, because of a fear of being shunned in the athletic community and even a risk of losing alumni donations to their program (Interview #1). These women did find some support in their teams when they disclosed, however the Colgate athletic community is small, and one team-member being socially and monetarily shunned may put the entire team at risk of the same.

The ideal rape narrative is too often upheld on Colgate's campus, ignoring diverse identity and experience. Men, queer women, and female athletes have all expounded how their various identities make it harder for them to receive support within a patriarchal

community, and many other identities were entirely left out of this study. It is difficult to challenge the dominant forms of power and control through which we organize our society, still, allowing rape myths to organize our survivor support means we leave out most of the survivors on this campus.²¹

IX. Recommendations

The culture at Colgate University needs to change from one that is generally unknowledgeable about issues of sexual violence and unsupportive for survivors of sexual violence to one where survivors of all identities feel comfortable sharing their experiences and receive positive and validating responses. Changing the culture is not a tangible recommendation, and I recognize this. Part of the obligation for such a culture change is on the students, and we must take responsibility for supporting survivors amongst our peers and friends; however, the administration needs to make continuous changes to its policy and actions in order to facilitate this transformation. The students who want to change the culture can only do so much without the backing of the administration, and if systems that disregard survivors continue to receive official sponsorship, students will continue to disregard survivors as well.

The administration recently put in place plans for better survivor support, largely due to years of student activism.²² Working with students and an external review board, the University plans to change its language to recognize student survivors, to create a new task force that will address issues of sexual violence, to pay for the training of ten SANE nurses and facilities at Community Memorial Hospital to house them, and to

²¹ For more quotes on identity and survivorship, see Appendix 5.8

²² In the interest of full disclosure, I should note that I was a part of much of this activism for more than two years.

create a new Sexual Violence Response and Education Center.²³ The task force and the Response Center have the most bearing on my following suggestions, but all of these plans are important. While these changes are welcome and appreciated, they will not solve everything. The conversations need to continue, and the administration needs to listen and take action as they do.

i. Trainings

The first thing I recommend is more training about issues of sexual violence for everyone on campus: students, staff, and faculty. There are two different types of training I suggest. First, we need to make sure that people recognize sexual violence of all kinds, and that people of all identities are impacted by it. While all first-years currently attend a presentation on Colgate's policies on sexual misconduct, this presentation takes place during a very busy and intense time for new students, who might not be able to retain much of the information. In my experience, this presentation was also too abstract for many people to fully grasp its implications. Yes Means Yes and Bystander Intervention are two very successful student-led programs, but they are optional. Those who most need the trainings (those who commit sexual violence) are often able to avoid them. All of these programs could also stand to be more inclusive of diverse identities. Hopefully, with clear and mandatory training on positive sexuality, consent, and sexual violence of all types, from harassment to domestic violence, no survivor will be left wondering if what happened to them was wrong. No one should have to doubt her/his/hirself or take the blame for a traumatic event like sexual violence. This training would hopefully lead

²³ The name for this center is still not finalized

to conversations on campus that are more inclusive and do the work to negate the prevailing rape myth.

The second training we need as a campus is a training on how to recognize rape culture and combat internal prejudices that lead to the rape myth, as well as how to talk to and support individual survivors. Expecting people to know immediately how to respond to a disclosure of sexual violence when they may have never even thought about it before is dangerous. Explaining that sexual violence can and does happen to people of all identities may help people identify their own internal prejudices and how they have been affected by rape culture and the rape myth. Emphasizing that survivors need immediate belief and validation, not questioning or doubt is a very simple but important task. Additionally, if more people understood how trauma is long-term, survivors would not feel pressured to heal in a few weeks. It should not always fall on other survivors to provide this understanding and care. The new Sexual Violence Response and Education Center could be responsible for planning and conduction such trainings, with support from the administration and task force.

ii. Confidential Sources of Support and Information

Every student needs to know what resources are available on campus for survivor support and for reporting. Too many respondents said they were unsure of what to do after their attack. Colgate should have a confidential place or person where survivors could talk out what was concerning them, without worrying that they would be pressured into reporting or EGP. As one survivor said,

I know all these things are here, but it's all self-activated. Like I have to go somewhere and tell someone like this has happened to me before I feel like I'm welcomed in and I have those resources... I wish it were the other way. I wish there was a place it was understood where if you went here, everything was understood. I don't even know if

that's possible but it's hard enough to get yourself to go do but then to have to recount anything to get the help you need is just difficult. (Interview #9)

A safe place to talk, with no expectations of survivors to withhold information or report everything, would be of immense help in providing everyone with information and guiding survivors to proper resources, whether it be reporting, the counseling center, student groups, off-campus resources, or other survivors. Right now, there is no structured and safe place to have these conversations and work these things out, but hopefully the new Center will be able to fulfill this role, perhaps with student advocates or with outside sources such as the local Victims of Violence.

iii. Better Support for the Counseling Center

In a similar vein, the counseling center has fully demonstrated its vital role in providing support to survivors, both individually and with the survivor group. However, the counseling center is often overbooked and overwhelmed with students. The administration needs to provide more support to the counseling center by funding more positions so that all survivors who want to seek professional support are able to. With more support and more staff, perhaps there could be more than one survivor support group, which would not only secure professional help for survivors, but also connect them to others who can understand what they are going through. Survivors are often the best support for each other, and an institutional framework for connecting us is invaluable.

iv. The Creation of Long-Term Academic Support Plans for Survivors

It is extremely difficult to be a student and to be dealing with the effects of trauma. Many survivors of sexual violence struggle academically because of PTSD. It is unfair that their grades and GPAs are often negatively affected, so the administration

needs to offer much more guidance and support in this. As part of the new task force, Center, or as policy whenever a student reports sexual violence, survivors should have the option to come up with a long-term academic plan with an administrator they feel comfortable with. This plan should help them deal with the negative effects of trauma on their scholastic pursuits. Because each survivor reacts differently, each academic plan would be different, but having institutional understanding and support in place might make a collegiate career slightly less difficult for survivors.

v. An Examination of the Role of Athletics in Survivor Support

Finally, there is a worrying power dynamic among the athletic division at Colgate. The University needs to examine in-depth how men's and women's athletic teams are funded and provided resources, and how these structures might prevent survivors from reporting and getting the help they need. No survivor should feel pressured to stay silent because of fear of social stigma or loss of funding for a team. This investigation and report should fall to the new task force, and should be of priority.

X. Conclusion

Colgate University, like other colleges and universities around the nation, struggles with sexual violence on campus. While we are not alone in this problem, it is absolutely the responsibility of the institution and the campus community to address the problem and to take responsibility for providing support to the survivors who have to live day-to-day with the effects of trauma. This study was meant to give a space for survivors to talk about their experiences healing and surviving on this campus, and what support they have or have not found. Conversation needs to continue to happen as we move

forward so that more voices will be included and support systems do not stagnate. Survivors need safe places to make connections and tell their stories, they need help dealing with academics on top of trauma, and they need more social support from other students. Changes need to occur at every level to make this happen, from the Board of Trustees and administration to the faculty, to the students themselves.

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XII. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Survey Questions

- Demographics – gender, sex, race, year of graduation, income, etc
- I have experienced sexual violence (any sexual act committed or attempted without free, enthusiastic consent) in my lifetime. Y/N
- My experience of sexual violence occurred on Colgate’s campus Y/N, in the year:
- Number of people I have told about my experience of sexual violence:
- Number of people on Colgate’s campus that I have told about my experience of sexual violence:
- I reported to the Colgate Y/N
- I reported to another legal institution: _____ Y/N
- I went through an EGP process Y/N
- I felt supported through the EGP process 0-5, n/a
- I thought the EGP was successful 0-5, n/a
- I regret reporting to Colgate 0-5, n/a
- I regret reporting to another institution 0-5, n/a
- I would change my decision to report or not if I could Y/N
- I am aware of the support services Colgate offers for survivors of sexual violence 0-5
- I use the counseling center for support 0-5
- I use The Network for support 0-5
- I use the Women’s Studies Center for support 0-5
- I use the chaplaincy for support 0-5
- I use another group(s) for support: _____
- I feel supported by my friends at Colgate 0-5
- I feel supported by my peers at Colgate 0-5
- I feel supported by my professors at Colgate 0-5
- I feel supported by my academic dean at Colgate 0-5
- I feel supported by the Colgate administration 0-5
- I wish there was more support at Colgate 0-5
- My identity makes it harder for me to feel supported at Colgate 0-5
- My gender identity makes it harder for me to feel supported at Colgate
- My racial/ethnic identity makes it harder for me to feel supported at Colgate
- My class identity makes it harder for me to feel supported at Colgate
- My nationality makes it harder for me to feel supported at Colgate
- I am comfortable talking about my experience 0-5
- I am comfortable living on this campus 0-5
- I feel safe on this campus 0-5
- I feel threatened on this campus 0-5
- Campus Safety helps me feel safe 0-5
- My identity makes it harder for me to feel safe on this campus 0-5
- My gender identity makes it harder for me to feel safe on this campus
- My racial/ethnic identity makes it harder for me to feel safe on this campus

- My class identity makes it harder for me to feel safe on this campus
- My nationality makes it harder for me to feel safe on this campus
- I feel like I have been able to heal, at least in part, from my experience
- I would be able to recover from my experience better if I was not at Colgate 0-5
- I need other things from Colgate to be able to heal 0-5
- This is what I would change here if I could: _____
- This is what I like about the support here: _____
- Anything else you want to say:

Appendix 2 – Interview Questions

1. Tell me about what is important to your identity (gender, race, sexuality, class year, nationality, etc)
2. Do you use a specific word or term to describe yourself? (Ex I prefer survivor over victim)
3. Were you attacked at Colgate? About when?
4. If you're comfortable telling me, what did you do after you were attacked?
 - a. Did you seek medical services at any point?
5. Have you told anyone? Who (generally – relationship to you) was the first person you told? How did you make the decision to tell them?
 - a. What was their response like? How did it make you feel? Did it influence your decisions to tell other people?
6. What have the best/most helpful responses been when you have told someone? Who, generally have positive responses come from? How did they make you feel or help you?
7. What have the worst/least helpful responses been? Who, generally, have they come from? How did they make you feel?
8. What resources are you aware of at Colgate that can be used for survivor support? How do you know about these? Do you use these resources? Why/why not?
9. Do you know other survivors on this campus? How do you interact with them? How do you know about one another?
10. Did you officially report your attack to the university? How did you make that decision? What was the experience of reporting like?
11. Did you go through EGP? How did you make that decision? Would you change your decision to go through if you could?
 - a. If YES: What was your experience of EGP like?
 - b. If NO: What is your perception of EGP and its role on this campus?
12. Did you report to another institution?
13. How do you think your identity has influenced how people respond when you tell them about your experience? How does this impact your feeling of support?
14. What makes you feel safe or unsafe on this campus? Why?
15. How does Campus Safety impact your feeling of safety on this campus?
16. Have you ever felt pressured to leave campus because of people or things related to your experience?
17. How has your experience impacted your ability to be involved on campus? How has it impacted your academic experience?

18. How have your professors been supportive or unsupportive of you?
19. Are you aware of the activism around sexual violence that has happened on this campus? How has it affected you?
20. If you could say anything to the administration or Colgate as an institution, about this issue or your experience, what would you say?
21. If you could say anything to the students, what would you say?
22. Is there anything else you would like to talk about regarding your experience with healing (processing/accepting) from trauma on this campus?

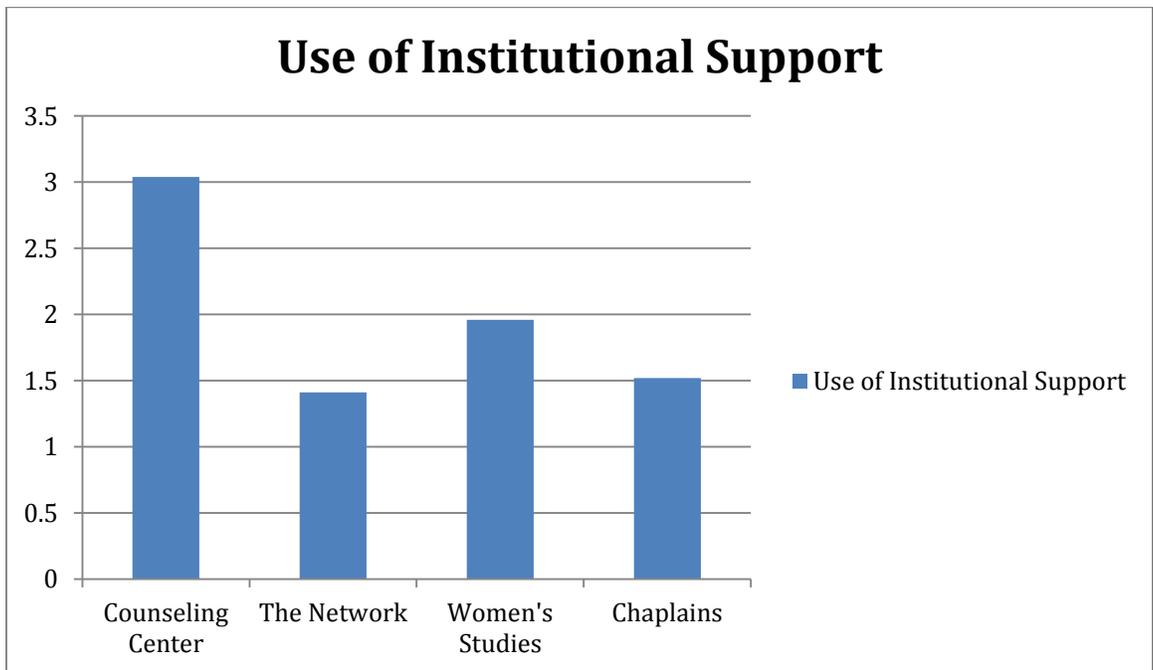
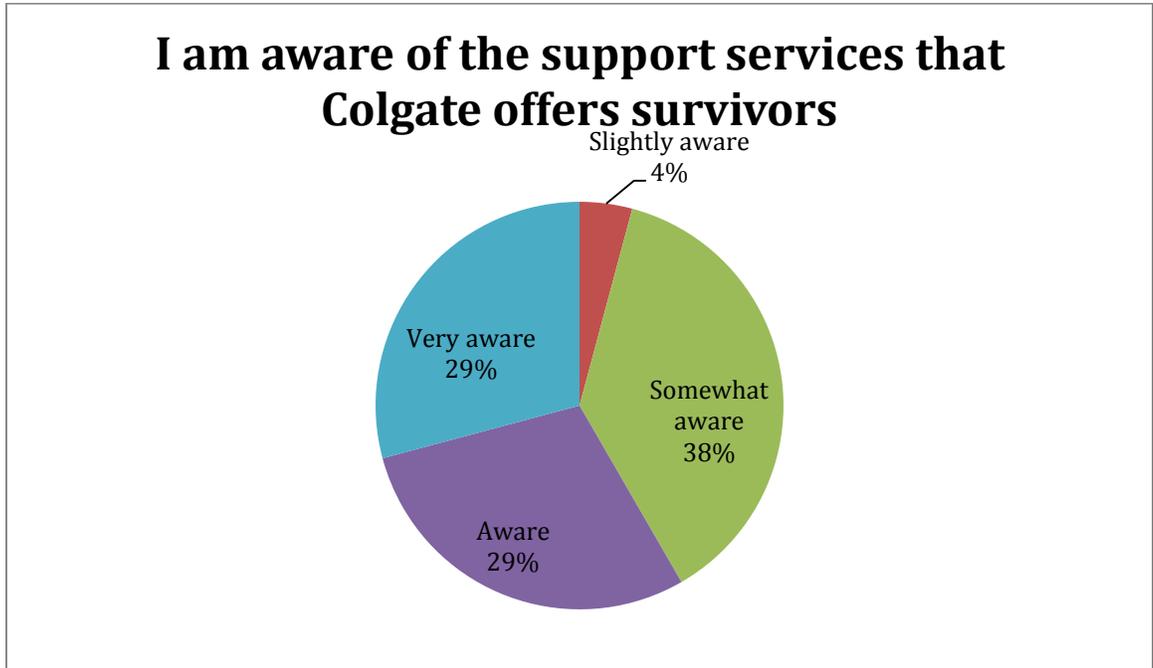
Appendix 3 - Survey Demographics

26 responses, 24 answered most questions.

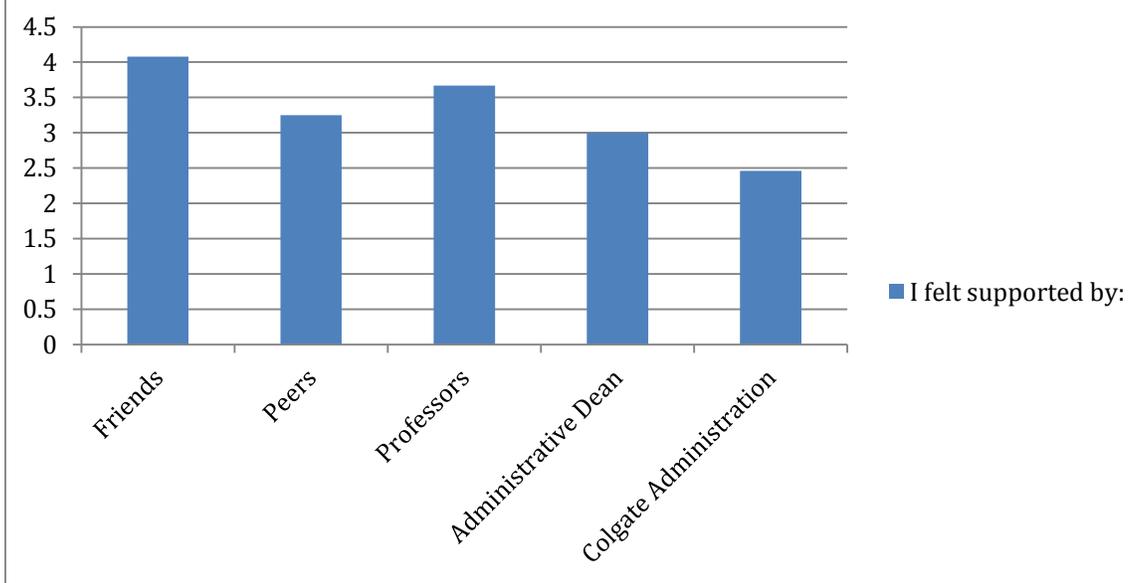
- Gender
 - 4 male, 22 female
- Sexuality
 - 17 heterosexual,
 - 1 asexual,
 - 1 lesbian,
 - 1 gay,
 - 1 fluid in feeling/heterosexual in practice,
 - 3 bisexual,
 - 2 who answered with their gender
- Race/ethnicity
 - 21 white/Caucasian
 - 1 Jewish
 - 1 Asian
 - 2 Latina
 - 1 multiracial
- Nationality (24 answers)
 - 19 United States (American)
 - 1 Korean
 - 1 Japanese
 - 1 Netherlands
 - 2 answered with their race
- Income (17 answers)
 - 9 At or below \$100,000
 - 2 \$100,000-200,000
 - 1 \$300,000
 - 2 \$400,000
 - 1 \$500,000
- Year of Graduation
 - 2 2014
 - 1 2015
 - 16 2016
 - 3 2017
 - 1 2018

Appendix 4 – Survey Data Results

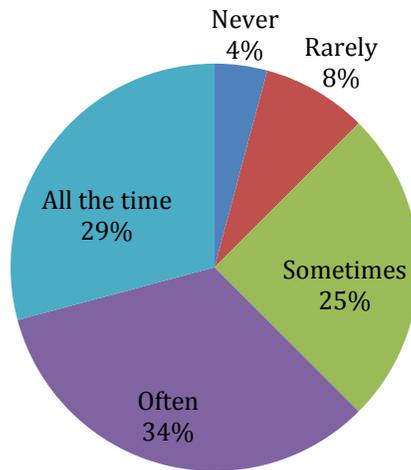
Note: All bar graphs are aggregate data. Respondents answered from never (1) to all the time (5).



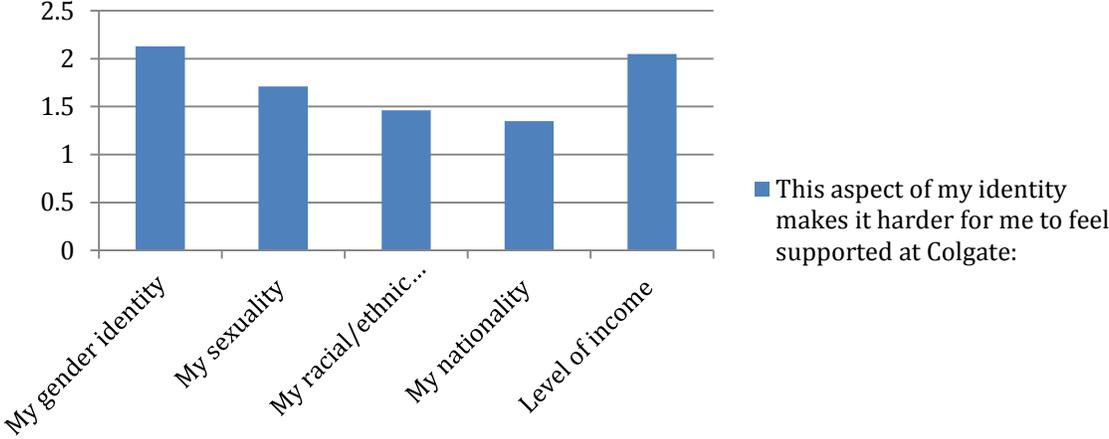
I felt supported by:



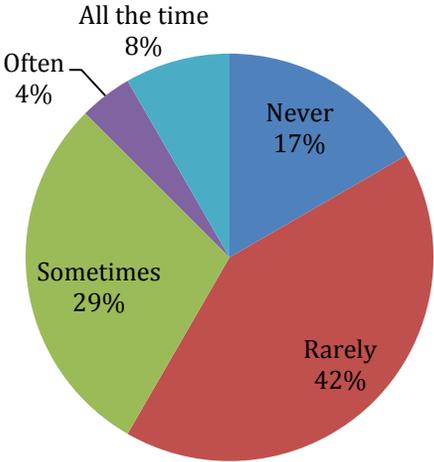
I wish there was more support at Colgate for survivors



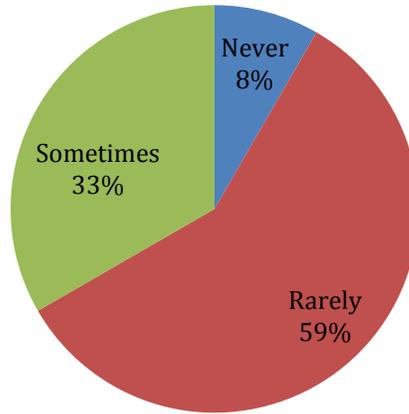
This aspect of my identity makes it harder for me to feel supported at Colgate:



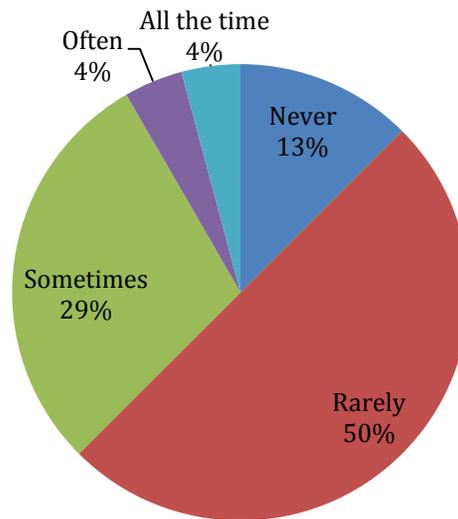
I feel comfortable talking about my experience of sexual violence at Colgate



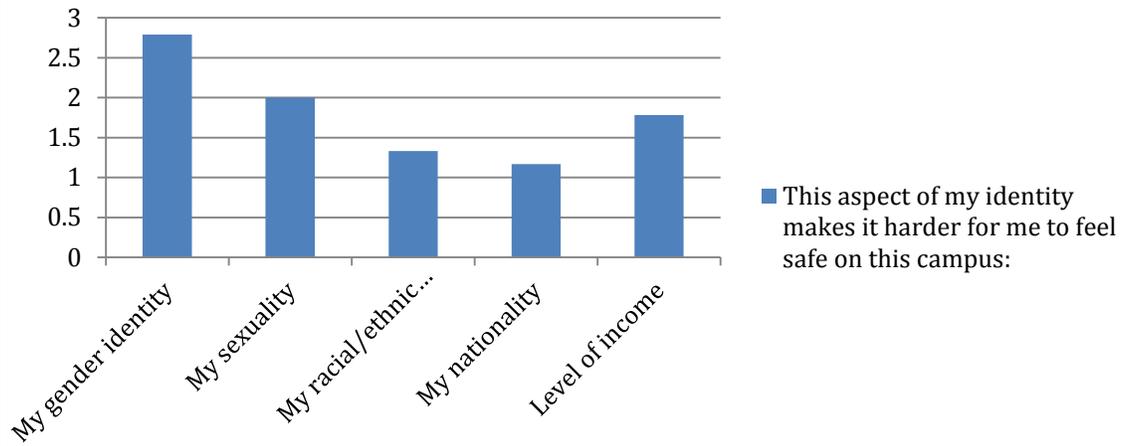
I feel threatened or in danger on Colgate's Campus



Campus Safety helps me feel safer



This aspect of my identity makes it harder for me to feel safe on this campus:



Appendix 5.1 – Quotes on Academics

“It’s really hard dealing with emotions and school at the same time...My academics have definitely suffered” (Interviews #9)

“Oh my academics are so fucked right now. My grades are going to suck, I dropped my thesis, which is something I’ve been wanting to do freshman year... with this I cant focus, I have PTSD. Its just a mess, I cant concentrate, I cant do school work... I’m losing my interest in things, I don’t eat right. I’m just not doing well, you know?” (Interview #7)

“I actually don’t think I’m going to be able to complete my thesis because of the amount of stuff that I’ve had to deal with. And because so much of it I’ve been dealing with this year, and its really upsetting, its really frustrating to think that something that happened in a span of a few hours has completely changed my outlook on how I can graduate.” (Interview #1)

“Something they should tell you when you go through EGP (but they don’t), your grades are going to fucking drop. Something they should tell you but they don’t is that when you decide to acknowledge that you’ve been sexually assaulted, and you decided to report a fucking assault or attack or whatever, your grades are going to drop. Whether it’s immediate or in the long term, they’re going to drop. And I wish they would tell people that.” (Interview #5)

Appendix 5.2 – Quotes on Barriers to Reporting Sexual Violence

“I guess it took me a while to realize it was an attack” (Interview #6)

“I probably need to talk about it more than I have, I would probably feel better if I talked about it more than I have, but its just like, I haven’t...Honestly, just since thinking about talking to you, I think because I haven’t really admitted to what happened, that [talking about it] hasn’t really been that helpful” (Interview #2)

“I knew immediately after it had happened that it was rape, but it took me about 3-4 months to realize that not only it was rape, but that it was something that was like important in my life and that I should talk about, and then since we were so close and it was just like something that I was finally able to feel comfortable enough to say to someone.” (Interview #1)

Appendix 5.3 – Quotes on Good Responses

“of my close girl friends, the best response I’ve gotten from someone who isn’t a survivor is ‘ok, what else do you want to share, what do you need from me right now? On the close guy friends side, I think the best responses I’ve gotten are ‘dude that’s not ok. Do you want me here right now, or do you want me to leave?’” (Interview #9)

Appendix 5.4 – Quotes on Bad Responses

“I have a big group of guy friends, and I dated one of them for a long time. So I did confide in him about it. And he actually kind of made a joke about it, I think that was his way of handling it. He felt really bad for me at first, but then later he would make jokes that I was involved in like an orgy and things like that. And that was like the worst response I got, because it became a joke to him.” (Interview #8)

“They were pretty supportive for the first two weeks, and I felt like I just didn’t get any support after that. They told me that I was talking about it too much and that I was crying too much, and they didn’t want to spend any time with me because I was so broken and that was my life, was going through EGP and trying to deal with what had just happened to me” (Interview #3)

“he was like critiquing my story, like wondering why I didn’t deal with it differently, like why I didn’t scream, like why I didn’t run away, why, kind of like all of the very typical hurtful questions someone could ask. And basically totally invalidated my entire experience” (Interview #1)

“students need to be better at supporting each other. I think it’s a huge problem that so many people feel that they need to be silent. I was silent because I was afraid people were going to think I was slutty. And I’ve heard too many times... ‘I think girls put themselves in that situation.’ So just getting rid of victim blaming. That’s the reason I stayed silent” (Interview #8).

“I still feel embarrassed by my story because students victim blame” (Survey #20)

“I would like to see more support from males on this campus and other students who do not know how serious sexual assault is” (Survey #20)

“I would have felt stronger if there were male allies involved too. I knew my female friends had my back and I had a strong community of women around me who would have defende [sic] and supported me, but I was afraid of the perspective of the male community” (Survey #8)

Appendix 5.5 – Quotes on Other Survivors

“I have good days and bad days, and its really nice around other survivors to be like I’m having a bad day, and have them immediately understand and know what that means... I find it the most comforting to just sit with that out there and just have that vibe.” (Interview #9)

“As I’ve become more open about my experience, more and more of the people that I talk to on a daily basis are other survivors. Because it is something that affects you on a day-to-day basis. Having someone who I can talk about those things with, yea, its really

changed, I don't think I would be like in the same group of friends, or the same mindset, or same like setting, if this had not happened.” (Interview #1)

Appendix 5.6 – Quotes on Speak-Outs

“The first time that I shared my first experience was legitimately at a speak out. I had never experienced a space before that in which anyone could talk about that stuff. Just because my family is very victim blamey... [in a speak-out] it just felt safe enough to admit to myself.” (Interview #9)

“The speak-out was definitely the most impactful part of it. Because protesting, its easy enough to be like oh they're overreacting right now, but to hear the raw emotion and pain involved in going to the speak-out really just resonated with so many people. I think its easy to perceive a protest as combative, but how can you deny seeing the pain and anguish on your fellow classmates faces when they're sharing their traumatic experience?” (Interview #9)

“I got very angry, there was a lot of ignorance from people that surfaced. Like I remember I was talking to one girl, who said she was upset that people were asked to leave the speak-out, because she was like well what if the guys are trying to like repent for what they did. To get to that thought, you have to want to be on the easy side so badly, to be on the side of a perpetrator. Things like that made me very upset. And I think also, because of the speak out and the protest, that's when I talked the most about it to people, so that affected me in a way” (Interview #2)

“Prior to [the speak-out] I hardly talked about what happened... I think that [my friends] thought because time passed that I was fine... so the speak out was kind of the first time that I decided what happened to me wasn't ok. And that's when I started to talk about it more... after that I spoke about it a lot more to my friends and my coaches. And it was the first time I took steps toward healing, which was really good. I think the biggest thing was it was the first time I allowed myself to think about it. I was quiet for so long, so it was just like I finally dealt with it.” (Interview #8)

“It was really powerful to be able to stand around Women's Studies and really have like a concrete way to express frustration and express that this is a problem. Especially because it is something that is such a big part of my day to day life with my friends and how everything works. It was really empowering.” (Interview #1)

Appendix 5.7 – Quotes on EGP and Administrative Support

“Before I was raped, I better understood the EGP process, the whole innocent before proven guilty thing, but after having experienced rape, I know no one make that up. There is no doubt.” (Interview #7)

“is this system really designed for me or is it for your convenience? Because if it's for your convenience, I'll just chill in the back...” (Interview #5)

“I knew all the steps, and I knew all the numbers of who to talk to, and I chose to use none of them. Which I found like, the more I look back on it, I support my decision, I think its fine what I did and how I dealt with it for me, but that’s really upsetting that I didn’t think that even going to Colgate health services would be a good thing to do.” (Interview #1)

“Thank you for the support that I’ve received, and while I know that some people have not had good experiences, mine has been good, and I appreciate the whole support... they’re doing all they can to get me to graduate” (Interview #7)

“But I don’t feel like it was very supportive. I feel like they were really pushing me and my friend towards EGP, which I didn’t like. They also told us multiple times how serious the situation was, but have not followed up since. So I don’t view that as being supportive. I also feel like the niceness was kind of fake, just to get us to report. I don’t know, it all felt very manipulative.” (Interview #8)

“I’m too scared to report anonymously... I was told that they [the accused] are notified that someone reported hem and I don’t want him to know it was me” (Survey #11)

“I think I would have been more likely to report my experience if I had felt it would have made a difference. But I did not feel that it would accomplish anything, except more stress for me, which was what I did not need after the incident” (Survey #9)

Appendix 5.8 – Quotes on Identity and Survivorship

“But I think also not identifying as straight, people assume that I’m like more sexually loose. And people think that it would be more okay, that there was more of a gray area there, which is like upsetting as well. That I don’t think is like a very fair description, like I said no, it shouldn’t matter to whom or like in like what sexual context that was.” (Interview #1)

“I know where to turn if I were sexually assaulted outside my relationship, but this situation for me felt much more nuanced, and I wish I had know of easy-to-access resourced for women in abusive relationships or who were experiencing dating violence. I didn’t feel right entering circles that I viewed particularly for survivors of rape, sexual assault outside relationships” (Survey #8)

“I think we need to talk more about sober sexual assault because in my case we were both sober and I feel as if it happening were 100% my fault” (Survey #11)