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The Impact Of Religiosity On Sexual Victimization Experiences And Reporting Behaviors Among College Students

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THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOSITY ON SEXUAL VICTIMIZATION EXPERIENCES AND REPORTING BEHAVIORS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between religiosity of female college students and sexual victimization experiences. These experiences include the reporting behaviors that take place subsequent to an act of sexual victimization. The study utilized secondary data gathered from the forth wave of a longitudinal study funded by the National Institute of Justice between 1990 and 1995. The study used multidimensional levels of religiosity to analyze and to assess its impact on the sexual victimization experiences. Findings ascertained that certain behavioral measures of religiosity were consistently found to be a protective factor against sexual victimization. On the other hand, subjective measures of religiosity were not found to be a protective measure for victimization. Instead, this measure was statistically determined to be related to experiencing acts of sexual victimization. Recommendations were given for a greater focus on campus resources pertaining to student victimization and more in-depth research on the role churches have in dealing with this issue.

“The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness.... Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud: this is the meaning of the word "unspeakable".... Atrocities, however, refuse to be buried.... Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims.... When the truth is finally recognized, survivors can begin their recovery. But far too often secrecy prevails, and the story of the traumatic event surfaces not as a verbal narrative but as a symptom....”

-Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery,* 1992

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

While sexual victimization is a pervasive issue in contemporary society, it is particularly important within a college environment. College age women and men reach a critical time during which certain experiences and gender roles are challenged, or reinforced, which may affect their sense of connectedness in certain relationships (Lee & Robbins, 2000). College campuses, however, do not protect students from victimization but may even increase their chances for certain acts of victimization (Fisher, Sloan, Cullen & Lu, 1998). The National College Women Sexual Victimization Study (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000) defines sexual victimization to include both attempted and completed rape, threats of rape, sexual coercion, unwanted sexual contact, visual and verbal forms of sexual victimization, and stalking. According to this study, among the ten total types of sexual victimizations listed, the incident rate per 100,000 female students ranged from as low as 9.5 to as high as 66.4 (Fisher et al., 2000). These estimates are higher than the sexual assault/victimization rate of .9 per 100,000, from the National Crime Victimization survey. Although acts of sexual victimization occur to both men and women, fear of sexual victimization among college females is significantly higher than males (Fisher & Sloan, 2003). A college female who experiences an act of sexual victimization may benefit from the role religion has in daily life, particularly during moments of crisis. Researchers have proposed the notion that religiosity or religious faith may act as a buffer in times of certain stressful life events (Ellison, 1991, Kendler, Gardner, & Prescott, 1997). Recent research has also explored the relationship between religion and general health among college students and found that those students who

consider themselves spiritual or religious are likely to report greater self-perceived health (Zullig, Ward, & Horn, 2006). This in turn affects their overall perceived life satisfaction. This may also be applicable for victims of sexual victimization. Religion, among other variables, has also been examined as a potential protective factor for sexual victimization among undergraduate women (Green & Nevarro 1998). Also, should religious students become victims of sexual assault, the manner in which they deal with the crisis and the aftermath may be entirely different from those who do not share a religious value system. In turn, even traumatic crime events can affect a person's spirituality (Kennedy, Davis, & Tyler, 2000). Therefore, there may be a relationship between these spiritually based beliefs and the way students deal with victimization experiences.

The current study examines a possible correlation between religiosity for college students and sexual victimization. First, the study will look at different sexual assault experiences or coercive sexual victimization experiences among students. Then, I will review the impact religiosity has on reporting behaviors.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Religiosity

Religion is central in the lives of many individuals. The practice of religious doctrine is highly personal as is its definition. According to Stylianou (2004), religiosity is a variable representing the degree to which a person is religious. It is important to note a delineation between religiosity and spirituality. Although both spirituality and religiosity share overlapping constructs, and may share similar characteristics, religion may be the framework for expressing spirituality and should be measured separately from spirituality (Miller & Thorensen, 2003). Given this clarification, it will be easier to analyze research on the role religion and spirituality have in an individual's personal life. Myers (2000), states that most people profess or acknowledge they believe in God and that religion is, at the very least, "fairly important" in their lives and one survey found that as many as 95% of Americans believe in God (Millller & Thorsen, 2003). Further examination of religion has to consider the different behaviors and beliefs that represent personal religiosity. One study divided this concept into two distinct classifications, extrinsic and intrinsic religiosity (Galen & Rodgers, 2004). Extrinsic religiosity would include behaviors such as going to church or attending bible study, while intrinsic religiosity would include behaviors that provide meaning to the individual alone. Prayer or reading the bible would be examples of this personal dimension of religiosity. This almost exactly parallels the private and public definitions of religiosity used in the

research conducted on adolescents and their sexual behaviors (Adamczyk & Felson, 2006). It is important to note that both aspects of religiosity exist, together at different times and in varying degrees, for most individuals. Both definitions, when used to define religious practice, appear to have an important and beneficial effect on an individual's life coping skills and well being. This can also be applicable to college students. Due to the number of multiple stressors that exist during college, students might seek comfort in their religious and even spiritual beliefs and practices (Frankel & Hewitt, 1994). Students may also turn to members of their particular church for support, in times of crisis.

Influence of Church Attendance in the Lives of University Students.

College can be a time for growth, as many individuals transition from adolescence to adulthood. One practice that may play a role in a student's personal life is church attendance. Research conducted by Evans et al. (1995) notes that personal religious behavior, such as church attendance, is reinforced by association with fellow church members or believers. Other research, however, has found that religious activities or teachings may have a stronger influence on social life than participation itself (Pearce & Axinn, 1998). Quite often this is because public participation in church, or other outward religious practices, are not always a valid indicator of an individual's core values. Additional research on college students indicates that when religiosity is measured by church attendance, and happiness is measured through the use of the Depression-Happiness Scale, there is no significant relationship between religiosity and happiness (Lewis, 2002). Another study dealing with undergraduate students, found that attitudes

toward Christianity are more powerful predictors of self-reported general health than religious behavior such as church attendance or prayer.

Frequency of church attendance must also be taken into consideration. In a Catholic sample conducted by Dillon (1996), 38% of respondents at a private University admitted they attended church weekly or monthly. Also, 28% attended church services a few times a year or on special occasions, while 34% said that they never attended church. In one study 22.7% admitted they attended church weekly or more, 23.4% admitted they attended church two to three times a month, 25.3% said they went to church once every month or so, 18.2% responded they went a few times, and 10.4% responded they never attended church (Lewis, 2002). Frequency of church attendance might also be related to other aspects of personal religiosity. One study dealing with the impact religion and spirituality have on health for college students, found that those students who attend church more than once a week also reported praying more (Nagel and Sgoutas-Emch, 2007). For many students, religion can not only be a positive outlet in dealing with everyday life experiences, but also during those times of personal distress and crisis.

Role of Religion in Times of Crisis

Research supports the positive effects of religious practice when applied to everyday life experiences, especially in time of crisis (Hood, Spilka, Hunsburger, & Gorsuch, 1996). While many individuals incorporate their religious beliefs within their day-to-day activities, others turn to their religion in times of need or even serious personal distress. One study on college students found that many individuals used various

combinations of religious thought, feeling, and behavior in an attempt to deal with certain life stressors that arise in their life (Pargament et al, 1998). The positive patterns in coping included religious purification, religious focus, religious forgiveness, benevolent religious reappraisal and religious factors, collaborative religious coping, spiritual connection, and seeking spiritual support. However, the same research found that there were also negative religious coping mechanisms involved. In other words victims felt interpersonal religious discontent, spiritual discontent, demonic reappraisal, punishing God reappraisals, and reappraisal of God's powers (1998). Both positive and negative religious patterns were associated with different outcomes. Consequently, there are times when religion can be a source of personal distress, as well as a positive mechanism for personal coping in response to personal crisis or traumatic life experiences, like a sexual assault.

Sexual Victimization/ Assault

Rape

Estimates of the prevalence of rape vary from one study to another. According to The National Crime Victimization Survey, a total of 176,540 women experienced rape or sexual assault in the year 2005 (U.S Department of Department of Justice, 2007). Data collected on sexual assault among college students finds that between 8-15% of college women are victims of forced sexual intercourse (DeKeserdy & Kelly, 1993). General

prevalence statistics on completed and attempted acts of rape fluctuate from study to study. In one college sample, ninety women, or a little over a third of the study participants, had experienced one or more episodes of sexual victimization while nine women experienced an attempted rape and fourteen women experienced a completed rape (Nasta, 2005). Completed rape statistics from that study are much lower than in more recent studies.

Labeling sexual victimization experiences as rape is an important step in understanding the seriousness of the issue. Rape is not only an act of violence against women, but also a serious social problem. Consequently, defining rape is integral to bringing the issue into focus. Women who have not had many prior sexual relationships, or have experienced abusive relationships only, may see forced sex as something normal (Mahoney, 1999). For example, half of the woman in one study did not characterize their experiences as rape, at the time (Basile, 1999). The Sexual Victimization of College Women Study (Fisher, Sloan, Cullen, & Turner, 2000) also found that for those incidents that were categorized as rape, only 46.5 % of college women answered yes thinking the act was rape, while 48.8 % answered no, and 4.8 % answered don't know.

Intercourse because of Pressure/Coercion

The nature of unwanted sexual behavior through pressure or coercion among college students, for both male and female students, has been documented extensively. One study found that 70% of college students have experienced sexual coercion after verbal refusal was given (Struckman-Johnson, Struckman-Johnson, & Anderson, 2003)

Men, like women, are vulnerable to experiences like unwanted sexual activity and coercive sexual victimization situations in dating relationships (Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988; Struckman-Johnson, 1988). Some research has broadened the definition of sexual coercion, beyond sexual intercourse, to include verbal persuasion and psychological coercion (Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson, 1994). Spitzberg (2001) found in his research of college students that over 40% of the sample experienced psychological and physical coercion attempts, after they expressed their desire to refrain from engaging in sex. In another study, only 6.5 % of college women said they had experienced sexual coercion (Kalof, 2001). An earlier study also found that victims often experience sexual coercion alongside stalking and obsessive relational intrusion (Spitzberg & Rhea, 1999). Additionally, sexual coercion and relational intrusion increase the experience of negative symptoms the victim experiences. These negative symptoms can vary from individual to individual. Broach and Petretic. (2006) notes that the effects of emotional or verbal coercion may be similar to that of force, which has traditionally defined rape. In other words, that research of 300 undergraduate women suggests that women who experienced coerced sexual intercourse experience the same symptom levels consistent with the group of women who experienced rape. Furthermore, many women who experience sexually coercive behavior experience long lasting negative effects from the incident(s) (Struckman-Johnson, Struckman-Johnson, & Anderson, 2003). It is possible that these coercive experiences have an impact on future help-seeking behaviors. Therefore, the influence of religion on victimizations experiences of a sexual nature, must also consider the importance of reporting behaviors among college students.

Reporting behaviors

Sexual Victimization Reporting Behaviors among College Women.

Sexual victimization on college campuses, along with a lack of reporting and help seeking behaviors among women, is still a prevalent problem (Nasta et al, 2005). At least one study found that the majority of undergraduate females in the sample neither reported nor sought help after victimization, and that less than 22% of women who experienced sexual victimization availed themselves to campus resources (Nasta et al, 2005). This is a little higher than an earlier study that found that 84% of females raped did not report the incident. Among those who did, only 12% reported within 24 hours and 4% reported within 48 hours (Amey & Bischai, 2002). Some women, however, wait longer than a couple days before reporting acts of victimization. One study included young women from the age of 20-24, some of which were enrolled in college, and found that 58% of women reported attempted or completed rape and had disclosed that information to one or more individuals within 12 months after the experience took place (Rikert, Wiemann, & Vaughn, 2005). Less than half of those women who experienced verbally-coerced intercourse revealed the information to the other person. It is possible the actual reporting rates of these experiences might be affected by the circumstances and sources of disclosure for each victim.

Research focusing on the reporting of sexual victimization should not only consider time intervals after an act has occurred, but also to whom the victim discloses information. Riker, Wiemann, & Vaughan (2005) found that most women disclosed

information to a girlfriend, a parent, mental health professionals, or one other person. Furthermore, negative interaction from these reporting sources such as medical personal, can lead to more psychological stress for victims of rape (Esposito, 2005). Some women do not disclose their sexual victimization experiences either because they were reluctant at the time of the assault or because when they wanted to tell someone, there was no one to tell (Esposito, 2005). Also, some women may not perceive themselves as victims and won't disclose the act of sexual victimization that has occurred (Rikert, Wiemann, & Vaughan, 2005). One study suggests that age of the victim and perceived level of violence may be related to why some victims of sexual assault view their experience as rape. (Mason & Riger, 2004). Consequently, it is not possible to garner the help seeking avenues of many victims. The importance of religion can provide options for coping mechanisms alongside these reporting behaviors, subsequent to an act of victimization.

Religion and Sexual Assault

Religion as a Coping Mechanism after Sexually Traumatic Events

Most of existing research has studied the effects of sexual victimization focusing on the emotional, intellectual, and social role in coping with traumatic events, however, the importance of spirituality as a coping mechanism for victims of a sexual assault is often overlooked. Intrinsic religiosity is correlated with a change in well-being, and this change occurs after acts of victimization occurs (Kennedy, Davis, & Taylor, 1998). This

finding may help explain not only why some victims are not reporting acts of sexual victimization, but also why some individuals are able to recover so quickly from their traumatic experience. Research focusing on life changes following a sexual assault has indicated that religious coping may be as effective as approach-oriented coping such as the expression of emotions or cognitive restructuring (Frazier, Tashiro, Bennan, Stegar, & Long, 2004). Also, some individuals may turn to God for dealing, or coping with, significant events, but don't also turn to God in terms of daily companionship (Pargament, 1990).

Religion, however, may not always be a possible positive outlet for victims of a sexual assault. Researchers have examined the factors associated with religious experiences and conversions, and found that despair can play an important role in framing beliefs (Hood, Spilka, Hunaberger, & Gorsuch 1996). One researcher administered a questionnaire to one group of sexually abused Mormon women, and to another group of similar women who reported no abuse (Pritt, 1998). They found that those individuals who had been sexually abused had a more negative relationship with God, felt more distant, and less loved by God, than the non-sexually abused group. Another study found assault victims had significantly increased spirituality and that sixty percent of victims had admitted to an increased role of spirituality in their lives, nine to twenty four months after a sexual assault (Kennedy, Davis, & Taylor, 1998). However, research into the role of religion as a protective factor against sexual victimization does not show promising results as these studies do. For example, Green and Navarro (1998) sampled 274 undergraduate women and did not find religion to be a significant protective factor for victimization.

Secondary variables related to religion, sexual victimization, and reporting rates

Rape Statistics and Ethnicity

There are other variables that have an influence on rape rates, and ethnicity is one of them. Black women are less likely than women of other races to define their sexual assault experiences as rape, or to consider themselves victims of sexual assault (Wyatt, 1992). From 2004-2005, there was a decrease in the rate of white victims from the age 16-24 who experienced rape/assault (Bureau of Justice statistics, 2005). By comparison, the rate for black victims, age 16-19, increased to 7.5, while those victims from 20-24 decreased to 0.0. In one sample, Wyatt (1992) found that white and black women were at an equal risk for rape. In another study, Hispanic women had the highest incident of attempted rape and Asian women have the highest incidence of forced intercourse (Kalof, 2001). Labeling acts as rape continues to be an issue when ethnicity is taken into consideration. One study found that white and black women were three times more likely than Hispanic women to experience acts that meet the legal definition of rape, but didn't consider themselves rape victims (Kalof, 2001). Without a firm definition of rape, there cannot be a clear delineation between who is a victim and who is a perpetrator.

Sexual assault reporting behaviors also differ by ethnicity. Consistent with most of the research on the subject, one recent study found Hispanic women are most likely to indicate that they had been raped (Kalof, 2001). In contrast, previous research found that Native American women report acts of rape more then white, black, or Hispanic, or

Asian women (Koss, 1986). A few studies have indicated that black women are less likely to report sexual assault experiences to police than are white women (Kaukinen 2004; Wyatt, 1992). One study found that 5 out of 12 African-American women had disclosed their victimization immediately after or within 24 hour after their sexual assault had taken place (Golding, Cooper, & George, 1997). In comparison, another study found Caucasian women revealed their assault sooner than African-American adolescent and young adult women, with a median disclosure time of one day (Rikert, Wiemann, & Vaughan, 2005).

Intercourse as a Result of Alcohol Use

Some research has found that certain situational risk factors, like alcohol use, are linked to sexual assault (Young, Grey, Abbey, Boyd, & McCabe, 2008). Alcohol and drug use are reported to be the main reason for unwanted sexual activity by male and female victims (Jackson, 2000). This may be because alcohol exacerbates the potential for sexual assault (Himelein, 1995; Ward, Chapman, Cohn, White, & Williams, 1991). Alcohol and drug use can also lead to high-risk sexual behavior, which can lead to an increased risk for victimization (Merrill et al., 1999). However, other research indicates that alcohol use is not related to victimization in college once prior sexual victimization attitudes toward sex were taken into consideration (Himelein, 1995).

Alcohol use is also an important factor in reporting acts of sexual victimization. Alcohol use by the perpetrator affects the disclosure of rape or attempted rape (Rikert, Wiemann, & Vaughan, 2005). Rikert, et. al. (2005) noted the importance of the number

of drinks in that disclosure rates by a female student to a friend or family member were significantly greater if the perpetrator had one drink or more compared to no drinking during the date. Also, victims who had experienced some pressure to use alcohol were somewhat more likely, compared to those individuals not pressured, to disclose verbal sexual coercion.

Coercive Intercourse and Sex History

Some research has explored the relationship between intercourse through coercion and sexual history (Clements-Schreiber et al., 1998; Hartwick, Desmarais, & Hennig., 2007). Findings from a recent study indicated that the number of sexual partners was predictive for both male and female students' experiences of coerced intercourse (Hartwick et al., 2007). In one study focusing on sexual victimization among university women, victimization status was positively correlated with multiple sexual partners (Green & Navarro, 1998). Accessibility must also be considered when talking about sex history. There are higher rates of coercion when males expressed a stronger belief in sexual accessibility (Hartwick et al., 2007). This belief of sexual accessibility, and how victims define their experience, can be tied to a previous sexual history with the victim. Having a previous sexual history with the perpetrator can lead certain young females to not perceive certain acts as coercive or forced (Rikert, Wiemann, & Vaughan, 2005).

Type of Victim- Perpetrator Relationship with Acts of Sexual Assault

Recent national statistics on sexual assault show that about 70% of victims stated the offender was an intimate, other relative, a friend, or an acquaintance (Bureau of Justice statistics, 2005). These national statistics are a good comparison for college samples. An earlier study reported a higher percentage of victims, finding that 93.5% of college females reported an acquaintance or dating partner as the perpetrator (Green & Navarro., 1998). For the spring semester, 90% of females reported an acquaintance or dating partner as the perpetrator, 10% reported the stranger as the perpetrator, and no one reported a family member as the perpetrator. Another study found that among college women, 45% of women were sexually assaulted by acquaintances, 22.4 % by romantic partners or husbands, 20% by strangers, and 12% by relatives (Uliman, Filipas, Townsend, & Starzynski, 2006).

Theoretical considerations

Certain theoretical explanations have been offered to explain sexual victimization experiences. Lifestyle routine theory posits that everyday routine activities help influence crime rates through the convergence of time and space of three specific elements which are motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardians (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Lifestyle routine theory may help explain victimization rates in that not only would there be a change in environment where males and females interact more

frequently, but also that in the absence of a capable guardian, females will put themselves in particular situations that increase the risk of victimization (Cohen & Felson, 1979). The academic environment, for those females age 18-24, increases the risk of victimization, as well multiple victimization experiences (Rodgers & Roberts, 1995). Social and academic interaction along with cohabitation can lead to high rates of potential sexual victimization scenarios. Some research has indicated that students might engage in a particular lifestyle, prior to these acts, which may precipitate their own victimization (Fisher et al., 1998). Along with explaining the increased vulnerability due to the interaction among males and females, this theory also explains the integral role alcohol has in acts of sexual victimization. Students are likely to consume alcohol in the absence of capable guardianship or authority figures (Osgood, Wilson, O'Malley, Bachman, & Johnston, 1996; Schreck et al., 2002). Consequently, due to the resulting impairment, college students are more likely to be helpless to a motivated offender (Vogel & Himelein, 1995).

Church involvement among college students not only impacts the potential for certain behaviors to occur, such as alcohol use, but also impacts the potential for situations which may result in dating violence. Some research has indicated that there is a negative relationship between church involvement and dating violence (Coker et al., 2000). A basic explanation behind this finding, more so for perpetrators, can be explained through social control theory. Religious institutions provide structure, particularly in the presence of adults, that allow adolescents to establish their social network and ties (Bair & Wright, 2001). Since religion is conventional, it tends to parallel the norms of society. Shame, or the potential of embarrassment for religious individuals,

can be a deterrent for committing criminal acts (Grasmick et al., 1991). It may be possible that students with high degrees of religious participation are too committed to religious restrictions and might not put themselves in potentially harmful or high risk situations. For some students, social ties impact dating violence indirectly by affecting future risk tasking behaviors (Gover, 2004). Adolescents, who interact with other religious peers, such as through church attendance, are less likely to interact with motivated offenders (Baier & Wright, 2001). Essentially, participation in a religious community increases their chances of engaging in constraining behaviors, which helps to lower their chances of interacting with these potential motivated offenders.

Rational choice theory may also help shed light on the reporting behaviors of victims. This theory proposes that people approach all actions in the same way and that each individual evaluates the particular costs and benefits of a future action or behavior, thus acting in such a way that will maximize net benefits (Iannaccone, 1997, p. 27). Since this could apply to any behavior, it may help explain reporting acts of sexual victimization. Victims are more likely to report the act to the police if the anticipated benefits are greater than the costs (Felson & Pare', 2005). Also, the social environment may have a role in this cost-benefit decision making process. Relationships with peers, friends, roommates and others can promote feelings of internalized moral guilt (Johnson & Hayes, 2003). It is possible many victims see these feelings as a cost. Thus, these spiritual concerns may keep students from help-seeking behavior (2003).

The vast majority of the research focusing on sexual victimization has taken into account several important variables as part of the prevention, the crisis of the assault, and the coping process victims' experience. Studies show that religion plays an important part

in many lives. It also shows that victims of sexual assault not only use certain coping mechanisms to deal with their traumatic pain, but also are hesitant to report such acts. There is, however, limited research on the vital role religion plays in the lives of college women and men, as it pertains to sexual victimization. My research will expand on this limitation to elucidate a wider range of variables that have a positive or negative effect of victimization experiences. Additionally, my research will examine the role religion has on reporting acts of sexual victimization.

Hypotheses

1) Students who are more religious are less likely to experience acts of sexual coercion/victimization.

2) The more religious individuals are, the less likely they are to report acts of sexual victimization.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Data

This current research will utilize secondary data from the Longitudinal Study of Violence against Women: Victimization and Perpetration among College Students in a State-Supported University in the United States, 1990-1995 (White & Smith, 2002). National Institutes of Health funded the five-year study. The study investigated different behaviors and factors related to physical and sexual violence. The study was conducted with a longitudinal design that relied on different waves to gather information. The design focuses on two cohorts. These cohorts include those individuals who were born in 1972 and those born in 1973. The first survey gathered information when those respondents were 18. The individuals who took part in that survey had to be 18 years old at that time. Data was further collected at age 19, 20, 21, and 22. The study included data on both men and women and utilized convenience sampling as part of the sampling design. The first survey, for the female data, included questions about the respondent's experiences pertaining to sexual assault, from the age of 14-18. Subsequent surveys inquire about the experience pertaining to that previous year. So, wave two would ask questions from age 18-19, wave three would ask about experiences from age 19-20, wave four would ask about experiences from 20-21, and wave five would ask about experiences from 21-22. Only undergraduate women and men were used in this study. Data collection included mail-back questionnaires along with personal and phone

interviews. There were more total cases for the female data, then for the male data set. There were a total of 1580 cases for females and 851 for males. The current study will utilize only the female data in the analyses.

Description of Data

Although the survey questions are divided into five waves, wave four will be used as the basis for my analysis. The last two waves contain the most questions applicable to religion, sexual beliefs/assault/experiences, and reporting. The final two waves allow for the best measurement of religiosity among college students. Data in the last two waves query students who have settled into the college atmosphere and adopted certain sexual and religious beliefs and practices. Consequently, these students will not only be more mature, but also will have found their own identity and self value within this college atmosphere. Wave four was utilized for the purposes of the research, because it asked more of the questions pertinent to religiosity than wave five.

Concepts and Variables

Three major concepts will be used in this research. The first, and most important of these concepts, is religiosity. In this research, religiosity is the independent variable, while reporting behaviors and sexual behaviors/ experiences will be the dependent variable.

Religiosity:

Religiosity will be operationalized through the use of survey questions referencing the individual's religious belief. One question focuses on a behavioral component to religiosity. Respondents were asked about how many times, in a typical month, they attended a church or synagogue during the last year. Response categories were: *more than once a week, once a week, one to three times a month, less than once a month, and never*.

Four questions focus on a subjective assessment of religiosity. These questions utilized the same response categories of: *disagree strongly, disagree moderately, neither disagree or agree, agree moderately, and agree strongly.* These were: I would describe myself as religious, religion should influence how I live my life, when I have decisions to make in everyday life, I usually try to find out what god wants me to do, and religion is a very important part of my life. These questions will also be combined into an index scale. All religion questions have five response categories. The potential categories from the computed index scale range from 4-20. The alpha score on that variable was .932. A

lower score on the scale indicates a low influence in respondents' personal lives, while a higher score on the index scale would indicate a greater influence of religion in the respondents' personal lives.

One question focused on the cognitive component in assessing religiosity. Students were asked: how much of an influence would you say religion has on the way you choose to spend your time each day during the past year? Response categories were: no influence, some influence, fair amount of influence, a great deal of influence. Another question that was used to assess religiosity, among respondents who had been sexually victimized, was how often respondents relied on religion to cope. The response categories were: *not at all, a little, some, and a lot.*

Sexual victimization experiences questions:

Sexual victimization will be operationalized through the use of the following survey questions directed toward the experiences females have pertaining to sex. Respondents were asked whether they had been raped in the past year (yes/no). In addition, they were also asked what type of sexual experience they had in the past year. The question focuses on the type of experience, or categories given by Koss. The categories are: no sexual experience, consensual sexual contact, unwanted sexual contact, sexual abuse victim, coercive sexual contact, and sexual assault victim. Most of the categories were created by those respondents who answered once or never to many of the victimization questions. The other question asks if a female had ever been raped. The response categories are: yes and no.

Reporting of victimization experiences:

Reporting questions will focus on the behaviors of the individual with regard to reporting acts of sexual victimization. Only those respondents who were victims were asked to whom they reported their victimization. The first question asks whom the respondent told. The response categories included: *no one, friend/family, clergy/ counselor/ m.d, police, and more than one of the above*. Respondents were then asked how soon after the experience they told someone. Potential responses were: *within 24 hours, within three days, within one month, between one and six months, and after five or six months*. The last question was about the type of sexual experience that was reported. All respondents had the opportunity to answer this question except those respondents who had never engaged in any sexual experience within the last year. The potential responses were: *consensual sex, pressure sex play, authority sex play, forced sex play, forced attempted sex, drugs attempted sex, pressure intercourse, authority intercourse, drugs unwanted sex, forced intercourse, and forced other sex.*

Control Variables:

There will be six main control variables for this research: alcohol use, drug use, type of victim-perpetrator relationship, dating history, sex history and race. One alcohol question and one drug question will be used. They both use the same response categories. The first asks: how often do you drink alcohol? The drug question asks: How often do

you use other drugs? Potential response categories included*: never, <1 a month, a/ month, 1-2 a week, >2 a month.* Another question asks about the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. That question asked: who was the other person involved? Potential response categories were: *a family member, a stranger, a casual acquaintance, a friend (please explain), and a boyfriend.* One question was asked about sexual history. That was: Consider your sexual experience with the opposite sex. With approximately how many different people have you had sexual intercourse during the past year? Potential response categories included: *none, 1,2-5, 6-10, more than 10.* One question aims at establishing potential prior contact with the perpetrator. The question asked: regarding this experience, had you and the other person ever had any sexual contact before? Potential response categories included: *none, only kissing and petting, and sexual intercourse.* The final question asked: what was the race of the other person involved with the following response categories: *white, black, and other.* This question will be recoded into dummy variables: white/other and black

Data analysis strategy

Data analysis will be conducted using the SPSS software. Various statistical techniques will be utilized for this research. The analyses will help to look at the two dependent variables for each hypothesis. Frequencies will be conducted with all variables to check for potential statistics problems, and to gather appropriate descriptives of the variables.

Bivariate analysis will also be utilized in the analysis to check for statistical measures of association. This will examine the relationship between each of my dependent variables and religion. A basic analysis will focus on correlations. A Pearson correlation is used to find the correlation between at least two continuous variables. This analysis will examine the association between personal religiosity, using all religion questions separately, and the victimization question that asked about type of experience.

Ordinary Least Squares and logistic regression will also be used for some analyses. These tests will also include my control variables to examine whether relationships between religiosity and each of the dependent variables remain after including important control variables. Four OLS regression analyses will be conducted, all using the religion questions, including the composite scale, as the independent variables. Final OLS regression analyses will yield a smaller number, n, compared to the individual frequencies because they are including those respondents who experienced an act of victimization. One OLS model will include the variable evaluating the length of time between victimization and reporting as the dependent variable and the independent variables. These variables are church attendance, the composite religion variable,

influence of religion, and whether a respondent used religion or not to cope with their experience. A second OLS will be conducted with religion, using the same independent variables, and the sexual victimization question given by Koss as the dependent variable. The second set of regression analyses will follow the same procedure including the control variables: alcohol, drug use, type of victim-perpetrator relationship, previous sexual contact, sex history, and race. Only the reporting question, a dependent variable, will use type of victim-perpetrator relationship as a control variable. Race and type of victim-perpetrator relationship will be recoded into dummy variables of 0 and 1. Race will be recoded into two categories of white and nonwhite. Victim-perpetrator relationship will be recoded into four categories, keeping stranger as the reference category. The Koss victimization question will be recoded based on level of severity.

Logistic regression is used to predict a dependent variable explained by variables that might be continuous or discrete. Six logistic regression tests will be conducted. Final regression analyses will include a lower total number, n, compared to the frequencies because certain religion questions yielded a smaller response rate. A logistic regression test will analyze the relationship between religion and the sexual victimization question, which has been recoded into the two categories. Another logistic regression will examine the relationship between religion and the rape question. Lastly, reporting rates, recoded into yes and no, will be analyzed. The second set of regression analyses will utilize the control variables and will follow the same procedure as the OLS tests. The control variables used in these binary regression analyses are race, drinking frequency, sex history, previous sexual contact, and drug use. The main religion question that will be utilized in these analyses is the composite variable

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Sample Characteristics

Descriptive information was gathered for the third wave used in the analyses. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the demographic variables. Most of the respondents are white (74.3%). Two general questions, with no specific time frame, focus on alcohol and drug use. The first question asked students how often they use alcohol. 19.6% reported they never drink alcohol, 33.6% reported they drank less than once a month, 29% reported had 1-3 drinks per month, 12.5% reported they drank 1-2 times per week, and 5.4% reported they drank at least two times per week. The second question asked about drug use. The majority of participants have never used drugs (92.3%). A little over half (52%) of the respondents have experienced sexual intercourse, 29.3% experienced only kissing/petting, and 17.8% responded they had no sexual history.

Table 1: Demographic variables

Demographic variables		*n*	%
Race	White	1142	74.3
	Black	343	22.3
	Other	53	3.4
General Alcohol use	Never	187	19.6
	<1/month	320	33.6
	1-3 /month	276	29.0
	1-2/week	119	12.5
	>2/week	51	5.4
General Drug use	Never	869	92.3
	<1/month	63	6.7
	1-3 month	8	.9
	>2/month	1	.9
Number of sex partners in the last year	None	218	24.5
	1	393	44.3
	2-4	266	30.0
	5-10	10	1.1
	More than 10	1	.1

Descriptive statistics on the independent variables were also gathered and are presented in Table 2. Respondents were asked how often they attend church or synagogue in a typical month. Results show that 11.5% responded they never attend church, 28.8% responded they attend less than once a month, 25.7% responded they attend 1-3 times per month, 16% attend once a week, and 18% attend more than once a week. A lot of respondents (42%) felt religion has some influence on the way they chose to spend their time during the last year. Among sexual assault victims, most respondents (70%) did not use religion to help them cope with their sexual victimization experience. Results on the composite question, assessing the subjective measure of religiosity, had a mean score of 14.56. This indicates a medium to high level of personal religiosity among respondents.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for variables assessing personal religiosity

Demographic variables	Values	*n*	%
Church attendance	Never	110	11.5
	Less than once a	276	28.8
	month	246	25.7
	One to three times a	153	16.0
	month	172	18.0
	Once a week		
	More than once a		
	week		
Influence of religion in the lives of	No influence	198	20.7
respondents	Some influence	398	41.6
	Fair amount	197	20.6
	Great deal	164	17.1
Used religion to cope with victimization	Not at all	154	69.7
experience	A little	28	12.7
	Some	17	7.7
	A lot	22	10.0
			Mean
Composite religion variable assessing			
subjective religiosity			14.56

Table 3 includes descriptive analysis of the sexual victimization and reporting variables. Respondents were asked if they had been raped or not. As illustrated in the table, almost 15% had been raped. The majority of respondents who had been victimized had sexual intercourse with the perpetrator (53%), while about 29% of respondents only experienced kissing/petting. The majority of students who experienced sexual victimization responded that their boyfriend was the other person (75.4%). Respondents were also asked a question about their sexual experiences (both consensual and non-

consensual). The majority of respondents (52%) said their sexual victimization experiences were consensual sexual contact, 22.2% said they had no sexual experience, 11.4% said they experienced attempted rape, 6.8% said they experienced unwanted sexual contact, 5% said they were raped, and 2.4% said they were verbally coerced into having sex.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for the dependent variables

Demographic variables	Values	*n*	%
Been raped	Yes	140	14.9
	No	797	85.1
Type of victimization experience	No sexual experience	212	22.2
	Consensual sexual contact	499	52.2
	Verbal coercion	23	2.4
	Unwanted sexual contact	65	6.8
	Attempted Rape	109	11.4
	Rape	48	5.0
Sex history with perpetrator	None	99	17.8
	Only kissing/petting	163	29.3
	Sexual intercourse	294	52.9
Who was the other person	Family member	4	.7
	Stranger	10	1.8
	Casual acquaintance	48	8.5
	Friend	77	13.7
	Boyfriend	425	75.4
Who did you tell	No one	277	51.3
	Friend/family	248	45.2
	Clergy/counselor/m.d	4	.7
	More than one of the above	11	2.0
How soon after did you tell	Within 24 hours	145	41.4
	Within 3 days	82	23.4
	Within 1 month	58	16.6
	Between 1 and 6 months	28	8.0
	After 6 months	37	10.6

Two questions focus on reporting behaviors. The first question asked who a respondent told. Most respondents (51%) reported their victimization to no one, almost 46% reported it to a friend/family, less than 1% report clergy/counselor/m.d., and 2% report more than one of the above. The second question asked how soon after the experience they told someone. About 41% of respondents reported within 24 hours, 23%

reported within three days, almost 17% responded within one month, 8% reported between 1 and 6 months, and almost 11% reported after 6 months.

Table 4: Correlations between the variables

	Type of experience	*Number of sex partners*	*Drug use*	*Alcohol use*
Religious attendance	-.076*	-.070*	.043	-.058
Influence of religion	.129**	-.261**	-.173**	-.412**
Religion composite	-.060	-.233**	-.119*-.	-.340**
Used religion to cope	.350**	-.049	.026	-.188**

*p < .05, **p < .01

Correlations were conducted between each of the religion questions and the dependent variables. Only those variables, with a continuous level of measurement, were included in the table. No significant correlations were found between all questions assessing personal religiosity and how long after the experience they told someone. The sexual victimization question was recoded for the purposes of analyses, so that a higher score indicates a more serious degree of victimization. Religious attendance and influence of religion were both significantly correlated with the type of sexual victimization experience. The correlation between religious attendance and type of sexual victimization experience is ($r=-.076$, $p<.05$) indicating a weak negative relationship and the correlation between the influence of religion and type of victimization experience($r=-.129$, $p<.01$), was also weak and negative. The former statistic indicates that more

frequent church attendance was associated with lower levels of severity of contact occurring within sexual experiences, while the later indicated that the greater the influence of religion in a respondent's personal life is associated with lower levels of severity of contact occuring within sexual experiences.

Other significant correlations, including the control variables were found. Religious attendance was significantly correlated with number of sex partners in the last year ($r=-.070$, $p<.05$). Thus, there is a weak relationship between religious attendance and number of sex partners such more frequent church attendance was associated with fewer sex partners. The religion composite variable was significantly correlated with drug use ($r=-.119$, $p<.05$), alcohol use ($r=-.340$, $p<.01$), and number of sex partners in the last year ($r=-.233$, $p<.01$). In other words, a greater level of personal religiosity was associated with less drug use, less alcohol use, and fewer sex partners. Influence of religion was significantly correlated with drug use ($r=-.173$, $p<01$), alcohol use ($r=-.412$, $p<.01$), and number of sex partners in the last year ($r=-.261$, $p<.01$). Thus, a greater influence of religion in the personal lives of respondents was associated with less drug use, less alcohol use, and fewer sexual partners.

Multivariate analyses

Three binary regression analyses were conducted in order to examine the relationship between my independent variables of interest (religiosity) and my dichotomous dependent variables. Table 5 presents the results of a logistic regression

analysis testing the hypothesis that students who are more religious are less likely to experience rape.

Table 5: Binary Regression predicting whether or not a respondent was raped (N=368).

	Model 1		Model 2	
Variables	Exp (B)	*B* (S.E)	Exp (B)	*B* (S.E)
Influence of religion	1.646	.499 (.266)	1.960	.673* (.278)
Composite religion variable	1.033	.033 (.056)	1.030	.029 (.057)
Religious attendance	.454	-.790* (.196)	.497	-.700* (.203)
White			1.183	.168 (.410)
Drinking frequency			1.290	.255 (.158)
Sex history			1.551	.439 (.226)
Used other drugs			1.046	.045 (.366)
Constant	.102	-2.281* (.543)	.010	-4.601* (1.069)
Nagelkerke R^2		.087		.128
Model Chi-Square		18.198*		27.334*.

*p < .05

The first model, including only the religion independent variables, was significant according to the model Chi-square statistic at the $p<.05$ level. The Nagelkerke R^2 is .08. The results from model one indicate that one religion variables was found to be significant at the $p<.05$ level. The first finding supports the hypothesis. With increasing frequency of church attendance, the odds of being a rape victim decrease by a factor of .454. Model two includes 4 additional independent variables. The model chi-square statistic is significant at the $p<.05$ level. The Nagelkerke R^2 is .13. Two religion variables, church attendance and influence of religion, were significant in the model. The findings on church attendance are very similar to the first model. Also, each additional increase of the influence of religion increases the odds of being a rape victim by a factor of 1.960. Frequency of church attendance still supports my hypothesis, while influence of religion does not.

A second binary regression analysis was conducted. Table 6 presents the results of whether or not the respondent experienced sexual victimization. This table is based on the Koss sexual experience question.

Table 6: Binary regression predicting whether or not respondent experienced victimization (N=371).

	Model 1		Model 2	
Variables	Exp (B)	*b* (S.E)	Exp (B)	*B* (S.E)
Influence of religion	1.045	.044 (.206)	1.195	.178 (.216)
Composite religion variable	1.069	.067 (.044)	1.072	.070 (.045)
Religious attendance	.565	-.571* (.152)	.591	-.525* (.160)
White			.621	-.477 (.303)
Drinking frequency			1.210	.191 (.126)
Sex history			1.778	.576* (.180)
Used other drugs			1.557	.443 (.362)
Constant	.300	-1.204* (.426)	.030	-3.501* (1.898)
Nagelkerke R^2		.065		.145
Model Chi-Square		16.860*		38.906*

*p < .05

The first model was found to be significant according to the model Chi-square statistic at the p<.05 level. The Nagelkerke R^2 is .065. The results from model one indicate that frequency of church attendance was significant at the p<.05 level. This finding supports my hypothesis that students who are attend church more frequently are less likely to experience acts of sexual coercion/victimization. With increasing frequency of church attendance, the odds of being a victim of sexual victimization decrease by a

factor of .565. According to the chi-quare statistic, the second model was significant at the $p<.05$ level. Again church attendance was a significant variable in the model with similar findings. Also, sex history was significant in this model. With increasing numbers of previous sex partners in the last year, the odds of being a victim of sexual victimization increase by a factor of 1.778.

Table 7 presents the results of a logistic regression predicting whether or not a victim of sexual assault reported their victimization. All reporting questions were only asked to those respondents who experienced victimization.

Table 7: Binary regression predicting whether or not a respondent told someone of their victimization (N=200)

	Model 1		Model 2	
Variables	Exp (B)	*b* (S.E)	Exp (B)	*B* (S.E)
Influence of religion	1.368	.313 (.248)	1.149	.139 (.281)
Composite religion variable	.948	-.053 (.049)	.928	-.075 (.056)
Religious attendance	1.098	.094 (.164)	.904	-.101 (.189)
White			.482	-.730 (.472)
Drinking frequency			.509	-.675* (.177)
Sex history			.801	-.222 (.257)
Some previous sexual contact			2.078	.732* (.213)
Used other drugs			1.276	.243 (.378)
Constant	.930	-.073 (.477)	6.956	1.940 (1.380)
Nagelkerke R^2		.016		.247
Model Chi-Square		2.398		41.043*.

*p < .05

According to the Chi-square statistic, the first model was not significant. The second model was found to be significant at the p<.05 level. The Nagelkerke R^2 is .247. The results from model two indicate that only drinking frequency and some previous sexual contact were significant at the p<.05 level. The more frequently a female drinks,

the odds of not reporting acts of sexual victimization decrease by a factor of .509. Also, as previous level of sexual contact with the perpetrator increases, the odds of not reporting acts of sexual victimization increases by a factor of about 2.078.

One OLS regression was conducted in order to predict how long after the victimization, the respondent decided to report their act. This question will only include those individuals who reported the victimization experience, hence the decrease in sample size. The analysis will test whether the independent variables predict how long it will take to report acts of victimization.

Table 8: OLS regression predicting how long after the victimization the respondent reported the incident (N=124).

Variables	Model 1 *B*	SE	*B*	Model 2 *B*	SE	*B*
Influence of religion	-.279	.229	-.163	-.325	.215	-.191
Composite religion variable	.072	.044	.212	.054	.041	.160
Religious attendance	.024	.148	.017	-.036	.143	-.026
Used religion to cope	.018	.153	.013	-.019	.143	-.013
White				-.112	.311	-.033
Drinking frequency				-.242*	.124	-.187
Sex history				-.352	.184	-.164
Some previous sexual contact				.458*	.166	.254
Used other drugs				.464	.269	.148
Boyfriend				.396	.284	.132
Constant	1.780*	.453		2.130*	.933	
Adjusted R^2		-.007			.171	
Model F		.790			3.566*	

*p < .05

Collinearity statistics were examined and no problems were found. According to the F statistic, the first model was not significant. The second model was found to be significant at the p<.05 level. The Adjusted R^2 is .17. The results from model two indicate that only drinking frequency and some previous sexual contact were significant

at the p<.05 level. Respondents who drank more frequently took less time to report the victimization experience. Also, respondents who had a higher level of previous sexual contact with the perpetrator took longer to report the victimization.

Table 9: OLS regression predicting level of severity of victimization within experience (N=371).

	Model 1			Model 2		
Variables	*B*	SE	*β*	*B*	SE	*B*
Influence of religion	.012	.130	.008	.176	.124	-.111
Composite religion variable	.064*	.028	.186	.062*	.025	.181
Religious attendance	-.478*	.093	-.362	-.392*	.087	-.297
White				-.243	.179	-.066
Drinking frequency				-.159*	.075	.117
Sex history				.673*	.101	.336
Used other drugs				.316	.204	.073
Constant	2.372*	.271		-.087	.489	
Adjusted R^2		.070			.210	
Model F		10.323*			15.050*	

*p < .05

A second OLS regression was conducted in order to predict level of severity of contact within sexual experiences. Collinearity statistics were examined and no problems were found. According to the F statistic, the first model was significant at the $p<.05$ level. Both religious attendance and the composite religion variable were significant. The adjusted R^2 is .07. The first finding supports my hypothesis. The more frequent the church attendance, the lower the severity of contact within the experience. On the other hand, the greater the influence of religion in the students personal lives, measured by the composite variable, the greater the severity of contact experienced by the respondent. The second model was found to be significant at the $p<.05$ level. The Adjusted R^2 is .21. The same two religion variables, church attendance and the composite religion variable, remained significant in the model. Also, the results from model two indicate that drinking frequency and some previous sexual history were significant at the $p<.05$ level. Respondents who drank more frequently experienced lower levels of severity in within their sexual experiences. Also, respondents who had a higher of sex partners in the last year experienced greater levels of severity of contact within sexual experiences.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the possible relationship between personal religiosity and sexual victimization experiences among college students. This study also focused on the reporting behaviors that followed an act of sexual victimization. Unlike the Green Navarro study (1998), my findings do show that religiosity among college students is associated with sexual victimization experiences. Specifically, individuals who attend church more frequently were less likely to experience a sexual victimization or rape. This finding is consistent with one study, showing that church attendance is a protective factor against sexual victimization (Mynatt & Allgeier, 1990). Also, those individuals who attend church more frequently experienced lower levels of severity of contact within their victimization experience.

The composite religion variable, which assessed the subjective measure of personal religiosity, was also was significantly related to severity of contact. In other words, as the influence of religion became greater for a respondent, the severity of contact within their experience became greater. Most respondents did not use religion to cope with their victimization.

A binary regression analysis, specifically focusing on the influence of religion in a respondent's personal life, also yielded some interesting findings. In the analysis that included several independent variables, the greater the influence religion has in the lives of the respondent, so do their odds of being a rape victim.

These results indicate that the subjective and cognitive measures of religiosity are not a protective measure against acts of sexual victimization, such as rape. These findings

compare to the behavioral measure of religiosity, which was found to be a protective measure against acts of sexual victimization. Perhaps one explanation for this finding is that there is a discrepancy between a respondent's view of the influence of religion in their lives, overall, and the actual behaviors she engages in on a day-to day basis. In other words, students are differentiating between certain spirituality based and religious based behaviors, and there is no overlapping. In this situation, a victim may fit the concept of: unspiritual religiousness (Miller & Thorensen, 2003). The respondent will engage in routine behaviors, like going to church or daily prayer, not transforming or transcendental beliefs that may affect their belief system or behaviors in their lives (2003). It is also possible a subjective measure of religiosity may be subject to interpretation error by the respondent. It is possible that different results may have been seen had the variables measured victimization separately, instead of as a composite scale.

The second major focus of this study examined the possible relationship between religiosity and sexual victimization reporting behaviors. My second hypothesis was not supported as there were no significant findings, from the regression analyses, assessing personal religiosity and reporting experiences. Only the second overall model which predicted how long after the incident the respondent reported their victimization, and included the control variables, was significant. Most respondents did not tell anyone of their victimization. A lot of students already have spiritual and religious problems during college years, in general, but those individuals who experienced an act of sexual victimization are among those most likely to have spiritual or religious concerns (Johnson & Hayes, 2003). As a result, these students may be turning inward in dealing with their victimization and do not seek-help.

The present study did find certain control variables significantly related to sexual victimization reporting behaviors. The two variables that were significantly related to whether or not a respondent reported their victimization were previous sexual contact with the perpetrator and frequency of drinking. There could be several explanations for this finding. In these analyses, the majority of women noted a boyfriend was the other person involved. Since the literature has found that most women may not perceive themselves as victims (Rikert, Wiemann, & Vaughan, 2005), it would be particularly the case for those individuals who already had a previous level of sexual contact with the perpetrator. The literature on sexual victimization experience has found that alcohol/drug use is a contributing factor in victimization experiences among college women (Himelein, 1995). In these analyses, respondents may not feel the need to report their victimization for many personal reasons. They may be embarrassed by their behaviors, they may feel they will be blamed for what took place, or they didn't think anyone would believe them. These are the most common reasons cited within the literature as to why a victim may not report sexual assaults or acts of sexual victimization. The same two variables, alcohol use and level of previous sexual contact with the perpetrator, were also significantly related to how long after the experience the respondent decided to reveal their victimization.

Limitations

As with any research, there are limitations that must be considered. First, all respondents came from a state university and only undergraduate students took part in the

study. Unfortunately, this limits the generalizability of the findings. Also, considering this is a longitudinal study conducted from 1990-1995, more recent research has been gathered that has shed light on the nature of sexual victimization experiences. Another limitation of the study has to do with recall. Each wave, respondents were asked to recall data from the last year and this may be subject to error. This is particularly true of questions pertaining to sexual victimization. It is a personal and sensitive subject and some individuals may have issues recalling or categorizing their experience. In addition, the data was collected based on convenience sampling, and only respondents who had an interest in the topic may have participated. The study also had a lack of documentation sources that made it difficult in gathering the appropriate variables and information needed for this study. Future research could better examine the relationship by utilizing multidimensional level of religiosity that was touched upon in this study.

This study did have some important contributions. First, it established the need to take sexual victimization reporting experiences, while considering the role religion has in the lives of female college students, seriously. These experiences are occurring and many are going underreported. My research also found that one of the persons closest to the victim, the boyfriend, was the perpetrator in the majority of the sexual victimization experiences. Since a high percentage did not use religion to cope with their experience, yet quite a few respondents attend church at least once a month, victims are not making the connection between religion and help-seeking behaviors for their victimization. My study has also shed light on the lack of theory that helps to tie religiosity and sexual victimization together. Rational choice theory does help explain reporting rates in that the cost of revealing an experience for the victims may be greater than if they did report their

victimization. For many students there is just too much guilt and shame that is associated with the experience.

Future research should keep some considerations in mind. Primarily, future research should focus on the availability of on campus resources. These resources may range to counselors to the spiritual guidance from within the religious ministries available on many campuses. Given the importance of church attendance as an important factor in female sexual victimization experiences, future research should also consider the role various churches have in dealing with incidents of victimization of a sexual nature. Focus should be given on identifying current or future programs dealing with this issue. Also, future research needs to expand on the role religious coping may have on negative life events, like victimization experiences of a sexual nature. Comparisons between male and female students may also shed light on the scope of the problem.

The results from this study can assist victims, or potential victims, on college campuses. Routine assessments given to a student seeking assistance must not only question for victimization experiences, but also questions focusing on the spiritual and religious importance in the student's life. As a result, more respondents might seek help and report their victimization experience.

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