Sexual misconduct remains a problem on college campuses despite years of documentation and research, and programs development and implementation. The incidence of sexual assault—through verbal coercion, attempted rape, and forcible rape—increases during the college years. The U.S. Department of Education’s 2011 Dear Colleague Letter on sexual harassment and sexual violence and President Obama’s recently established White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Violence in Higher Education address the need to provide more effective prevention and intervention programs.

The purpose of this study was to conduct systematic theory-based formative audience research to understand how college women and men make meaning of sexual assault and bystander intervention. A secondary purpose was to design an effective health communication and promotion campaign strategy to increase bystander intervention and prevent sexual misconduct.

### Methods

- **Phase I: Focus Groups Discussions**
  - 8 2-hour focus group discussions
  - 69 male and female participants
  - Poster, email, and in-person recruitment
  - $30 incentive for time and efforts, and light refreshments provided during focus group discussions
  - SoundNote iPad App used to audio record

- **Phase II: Data Analysis and Interpretation**
  - All SoundNote audio files transcribed verbatim
  - HyperRESEARCH 3.5.2 facilitated data analysis
  - A constant comparative method of open and axial coding used to analyze data
  - Research team met frequently to discuss emergent themes and findings

- **Phase III: Campaign Proposal**
  - Mixed-media campaign
  - Use of social media, text messaging, and posters
  - Development of video series featuring real life scenarios
  - Mobile application adopted for student body to report and track acts sexual misconduct, crime, and bystander intervention

### Participant Demographics

#### Race

- White
- African American
- Hispanic
- Asian

#### Class

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate

#### Gender

- Male
- Female

#### Sexuality

- Heterosexual
- Homosexual
- Bisexual

### Expected Campaign Timeline

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<th>Activity</th>
<th>Spring 2014</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Spring 2015</th>
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<td>Formative Research</td>
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### Conclusions

These findings offer practical suggestions to develop and implement a campus-wide mixed-media marketing campaign. In particular, these young men and women preferred statistics and facts that shocked them and held their attention. Male participants need to know that sexual misconduct is a problem on campus and that they can make a difference by intervening. Effective messaging for this audience includes testimonials and examples of role models intervening.

### Themes

#### #YesAllWomen Experience Sexism and Misogyny on Campus

Female focus group participants unanimously believed that sexual misconduct was a problem on campus. As one Greek Life member said: “I think any [woman] who shows their face in public is at risk of being sexually assaulted.” Females described a culture of fear, while male participants did not believe sexual misconduct was a problem on campus.

#### She’s Playing Hard To Get: The Myth that Rape is Falsey Reported

Male participants believe that women falsely report rape “for attention” and because they “regret” it. Overall, male participants did not believe sexual misconduct was a problem on campus. These participants suggested women misrepresented sexual misconduct and played hard to get.

#### Blurred Lines

Many participants invoked the popular Robin Thicke song “Blurred Lines” to described acquaintance rape and issues of consent. Participants negotiated complex understandings of consent and entitlement.

#### It’s Not My Place: Ruining a Good Time

Both male and females believe that intervening was the right thing to do, if it was safe to do so. They described bystander intervention as part of “being a good person.” The primary barriers to intervening included the ability to identify situations requiring intervention and believing that it was important and appropriate to intervene. A common phrase used by participants, “I don’t want to intervene and actually be ruining a good time.”

#### Barriers to Reporting: The Role of Alcohol

Alcohol emerged as a moderating factor in participants perceptions of sexual misconduct. Participants suggested alcohol was closely associated with sexual misconduct and played a role in women misinterpreting sexual misconduct and playing hard to get.

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