

My project will focus on raising community awareness of sexual assault, specifically on a university campus like UC Davis. The broad idea is to create an app that users can submit community alerts if they have concerns, hear of a threat, experience an attack personally or an attack on a close friend who doesn't wish to submit the information themselves. This is a very sensitive subject, one that deserves a lot of respect and understanding. To give my project full respect and effort, I have been researching articles about sexual assault on college campuses and the surrounding towns.

Per RAINN statistics, 23.1% of undergraduate women experience some sort of sexual assault. University of Michigan reported over 20% of their female undergrads experienced unwanted sexual attention (Gray). MIT reported 17%, University of New Hampshire reported 16%, and the Washington Post's anonymous poll to over 1,000 undergrads reported 25% of the female responses marked 'yes' to a sexual assault of any degree (Gray). The national statistic is 1 in 4 women (RAINN). That is 1 in 4 women who are not consensually touched, groped, kissed, penetrated, etc. But the damage isn't done with just that. The means and methods of the attacker forcing him/herself on the victim can include coercion, violence, abuse, threats, and more that cause psychological damage on top of the physical damage. However, only about 1 in 6 females seek help from professional services. Only 1 in 5 undergraduates report their sexual attack to a law enforcement branch (RAINN). These numbers are terrifying when we think about how many attacks go unaddressed, unaided, unsupported. Some victims feel they will be blamed for the sexual attack, as if they did something to warrant the unwanted advance. Others feel speaking about it only makes them relive it repeatedly and can't bear that experience. Some believe their attack wasn't "bad enough" to compare to others and therefore let it go unreported (Gray). The purpose of my app is to be able to submit a report or a threat or a hotspot area to avoid anonymously. By reporting it from behind a screen it gives the user the safety of not being tracked, of not having to verbally share their story repeatedly, and it gives the option to have a close friend speak out on behalf of the victim. Ideally, this app increases reported attacks by maintaining the security of the victim and consequently creates a safer community.

Within college environments, it is nearly impossible to stop the party culture, ensure only those of legal age are drinking, and that everyone uses the buddy system or a safe ride system of getting home. The next best option to maximize safety among intoxicated, young, vulnerable students is to create awareness. At the University of Missouri, an alumni group suggested banning female students from fraternity parties (Gray). Regardless of if this idea seemed legitimate on the surface, the students saw it as naïve and protested that this is an unrealistic suggestion. Female and male college students will disobey the school's rules if it means enjoying their early 20s more and living up to the college life that movies and media have created. Another suggestion by the alumni group was to limit the alcohol to nothing stronger than beer (Gray). However, again, the students spoke out that the alcohol isn't causing the problem. Being intoxicated shouldn't equate to being a victim of sexual assault.

My concept doesn't necessarily address the issue of how much alcohol someone has consumed or whether someone has drunk at a bar or at a fraternity house, but rather addresses where someone was attacked to hopefully significantly decrease the chances of someone else becoming a victim as a direct result of awareness. Vigilance is so important. By combining the students' mindsets with a heightened community awareness and involvement with each other's safety, my app aims to lower the statistic of 1 in 4 female students that are victims of a sexual assault.

Works Cited

"Campus Sexual Violence: Statistics | RAINN." RAINN, n.d. Web.

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