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Proposal

According to Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, women aged 18-24 have an elevated risk of becoming a victim of sexual violence and that already elevated risk increases three times as much for women attending college (Rainn.org, n.p.). Our group wants to raise awareness about sexual assault for all genders. We want to gather evidence through surveys from the DU student population on their experiences with sexual violence. Using our data, we will raise awareness by informing the student body and teaching students ways to prevent sexual assault. We want to create a safe environment at DU where rape is scarce and when it does occur, it is handled properly, and the perpetrator gets proper repercussions for their actions.

Raising awareness about sexual violence on this campus is our main goal, as we mentioned before. We plan on implementing this idea with a table set up on Driscoll for the student body to see as they pass. Many students walk on the Driscoll Bridge daily and we hope this location will bring attention of our issue to the majority of University of Denver's population. Visuals will help us draw students in and demonstrate the large amounts of sexual violence on this campus. To create a more interactive and visual representation of our data, we plan on having 3 colors of candy: one representing male students who have been sexually assaulted, one representing female students who have been sexually assaulted and students who do not feel they have experienced any form of sexual violence. We will have a key showing which color represents what part of the student body is being referred to. We will also include

flyers which will inform the participants about how they themselves can prevent sexual violence in their everyday life, if they feel threatened at any time. For example, keeping your keys in between your fingers in case of attack. Part of the table will include the misconceptions of sexual assault, such as, sexual assault is not always rape, but rape is a form of sexual assault and consent is essential when one is involved in a sexual relationship.

For our campus-wide activist project, our goal is to spread awareness not only on the existence of sexual assault, but the prevalence on this campus in particular. To gather information that is accurate and up to date, we plan on sending out a campus wide online survey. The survey will ask the participant's gender, age, and will provide a definition of what sexual violence actually is. Lastly, the participants will be questioned on if they have ever felt as though they were a victim of sexual violence themselves. Although it will be hard to get a lot of people to take the survey, we are taking into consideration that this topic tends to be triggering or controversial; this is an important and necessary part of our research. When displaying our information, it makes the numbers and statistics seem more real or "close to home". It isn't just something that we are reading in a textbook. Generalized information is not tangible, but our survey results are an accurate representation of what's happening right this second. Gathering this information is essential to our success and we believe conducting this survey online is the best and most accessible option. We plan on "marketing" our survey by telling people in our classes, dorms, etc. as well as utilizing group chats to encourage individuals to take the survey so we can get as many responses as possible.

For this project we plan on utilizing several different resources. One website called rainn.org offers many statistics about on campus rape cases and it also offers some tips on how to

prevent sexual assault. RAINN stands for Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network. We will use many of the statistics displayed on the website to compare our online survey data with, as well as use the information given to us to inform students about useful tips to prevent sexual violence. We will also inform people about this website, so that they have access to all of the important information and the provided hotline numbers. Andi Zeisler also mentions sexual assault in various chapters of *We Were Feminists Once* and utilizing this source will aid us in our project immensely. We will be able to use Zeisler to gain insight on how rape is portrayed in the media of today's world and make that applicable to our campus-wide project. For example, in one particular section Zeisler discusses a movie where a woman is sexually active with multiple partners and they become jealous of the other men. Instead of taking the anger out on each other or fighting for her, one man's solution is to rape her into being "faithful". If the media portrays rape as a way to punish people or make them learn a lesson, then it's influence can potentially be negative. A young impressionable man may watch that movie and think that rape is an appropriate form of punishment. Another reading source we plan on utilizing in our research is *The Combahee River Collective Statement* because they briefly discuss the rape of black women and even mention the idea of a rape crisis centers in Black neighborhoods. This source is not as up to date as other sources we have decided to use, but we plan on utilizing this fact to refer to this as "look at what we came from" source and analyze it for issues that still have not been solved despite, the progress our society has made.

With all of this, gaining diverse statistics will be difficult, but it is a very necessary part of our research. If we gain diverse statistics, we will learn more about this campus, thus allowing us to broaden our knowledge on how we can make a change, no matter how small. Ultimately, our group plans to educate and inform the students of the University of Denver about

the prevalence of different types sexual violence and use that information to help end the series of unfortunate events that have already occurred on our campus.

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Data Analysis

The purpose of this study is to bring awareness to DU's campus on how prevalent sexual assault is for all genders. Specifically, we want to investigate the effects of gender-based norms on males admitting to being victims. Before this study we knew sexual assault was an issue on campuses, but we were unaware of its prevalence on our own campus. We also knew little to no information about males and sexual assault. We wished to learn more about sexual acts of violence and attempt to raise awareness for its prevalence around us. We hypothesized that males are less likely to be sexually assaulted and to admit to said assault. "Men, however, are more likely than women to initially respond with anger, or to try to minimize the importance or severity of the assault." (Michigan Union n.d., n.p.). We questioned whether or not this has to do with gender norms, males are taught to act strong in all situations regardless. This study will allow us to know about the relationship between our campus and sexual violence. Our research question is "how gender norms affect people's view of sexual assault on themselves and others?" because we believed that this would accurately portray an issue that is often pushed aside on DU's campus. We thought of various outcomes to our research. Males either do not admit to sexual violence/harassment because our society makes them feel as though they need to be masculine and "untouchable". "Masculinity is a hard and small cage and we put boys inside this cage... the harder a man feels compelled to be the weaker his ego is" (Adichie, C. N. 2015, 26).

Our society teaches males at a young age that they must be hard and strong. Another possible outcome is that males are less likely to be sexually assaulted. “Approximately 19% of women will be sexually assaulted during their time at college. (Study published in 2007) [while] 5-6% of men will experience sexual assault during college. (2014 and 2007)” (Veracity Media n.d., n.p.). We tested our question in two ways: a survey and observations.

To approach the problem, we created an online survey with various questions. Our goal was to allow males and females to feel comfortable enough to admit to different sexual assault/violence they were the victim of. We expected for less males to admit to being victims. “Issues of reporting and talking about their experiences, challenges for all victims of sexual violence, may be especially difficult for male victims because of gender socialization issues” (Where We Stand: Male Victims n.d, n.p.). even though “of boys ages 14-17, over 20% reported experiencing some form of sexual victimization” (MORE... n.d., n.p.). We included the definitions of sexual assault, harassment, and rape to clear up any confusion that may have been present. We asked identifying questions to hopefully find trends within gender, sexuality, or ethnicity. When looking for participants to take our survey we reached out to males and females, but a large majority of our responses were female dominate. Less males admitted to being sexually assaulted and less responded to our survey as a whole.

After receiving our survey results we speculated that people are reluctant to respond truthfully even if it is an anonymous survey. We included an “I’m not sure” option for participants to answer when asked if they have been sexually assaulted, harassed and/or raped. We are under the impression that many of our “I’m not sure” respondents were reluctant to admit to being victims. We believe that this ties in very accurately with our argument against “Girl, Unreconstructed”

because we believe that creating a strong support-based environment, victims and survivors of things such as sexual assault will feel empowered to make their voices heard (Fudge, R. 2006, 155-160). We asked if participants who admitted to being sexually assaulted/harassed or raped felt their learning environment was affected and how. We also included questioning individuals on if they were with their friends at the time of the incident, if applicable. We specifically asked if they were raped/sexually assaulted/sexually harassed on University of Denver's campus, giving them the option to choose more than one, to get a more focused view. We asked if they reached out to anyone such as family, friends, University of Denver administrators, counselors, or if they kept to themselves. We then asked if they reported to University of Denver if they felt the university dealt with the situation appropriately. We allowed an option for our respondents to elaborate on any answers.

A majority of our participants were white, heterosexual females, as mentioned before. We specifically began to reach out to males once we saw this trend forming. Many of our male friends stated that them taking the survey was pointless because they could only answer the identifying questions provided. Looking at our responses percentage wise, this is proven due to the fact that more males responded to being raped than females. 4.2% of females surveyed admitted to being raped while 15.4% males admitted to the same thing. We speculate this is due to the low responses from males because the data only represents 13 males compared to 71 females. Although this is a fault in our data collecting, we believe that this proves that it's a possibility that many males may have been influenced not to take the survey because they heard it had to do with sexual assault. Males are less likely to respond to surveys in general (Holbrook, A. L., Krosnick, J. A., & Pfent, A. 2007, 506).

Another part of our research was taking observations of different situations to see our hypothesis in action. We took our observations from parties near the University of Denver's campus. As a group, we made sure to take a close look at every aspect of the parties: music, location, demographic, etc. The music at parties is usually pretty sexist and derogatory towards women, but one song in particular that we heard at a "pre-game" called *Rape Rape* was all about raping a girl on the first date. We have never heard anything as bad as that since. The party settings are usually barren rooms with flashing lights and alcohol scattered throughout. The music is always blaring, and you can't have conversation with someone unless you're screaming. Females usually get in with no questions asked meanwhile it is fairly hard to get in if you are a male. The parties become so packed that people are pressed up against one another dancing, talking, drinking, etc. This leads to a lot of groping and unwanted contact.

Multiple parties that we were invited to were specifically for females and females only. We heard one rumor that a hockey party we thought about attending was only open to females, so they could "easily have their 'pick' of girls". Another frat party that we attended was only for pledges and members of the frat, but no other males. Once inside, we were quickly rushed into a dingy basement with nothing in it except for a wine bag hanging from the ceiling on a string for "the ladies" and a table with three fans and a laptop on it. The music was EDM house music and the lights were dim and flashing rainbow colors. The Fraternity members were drinking beers while the girls were encouraged to drink the wine. The majority of the crowd was female and most of them were stumbling on the slippery basement floor. After we were thoroughly creeped out, we received complaints as we climbed the stairs to leave, but no male or female physically tried to stop us from leaving. There have multiple occasions where we were dancing in a group and men would grab us and start grinding on us; it will sometimes escalate to kissing. One of our

friends, Jane (using fake names in the scenario for anonymity), hit it off with a boy, Jake, at a party through the same scenario; she had quite a few drinks beforehand. They then offered to take her back to their apartment and she declined. They then continued to convince her that they would “just chill” and she ended up walking outside with them. There she met with one of our guys friends, Jimmy, and they went to the Jake’s house with his two buddies. In the time that Jane had traveled to the three guys’ house each guy had told Jimmy they wanted to “get with” our friend. Jimmy stayed with her the rest of the night and got her home safe, but no one seemed to understand how serious this was. We only observed one example of male sexual assault in my time observing these party scenes. It was Halloween weekend and one guy was dressed in female leggings and a sports bra. Multiple times he experienced ass grabbing and uncomfortable groping, and once these perpetrators figured out he was a male, they instantly scurried away. He expressed his discomfort to us about the situation and he realized how girls were treated almost every day. We also received two emails from campus security during our research week. One talked about drinks at a party being drugged and another talked about an incident where a woman was sexual assault near campus by a construction worker.

The majority of these observations demonstrate the typical idea of sexual assault/harassment: a female is the victim of a male perpetrator, but one example provides the lesser known scenario. A male being sexual assaulted by another male. This seems like a rarity and when I asked if he would describe the situation as sexual assault he said no. Men are taught that being a victim of assault is not masculine, and therefore, refrain from sharing their experience, and we have first-hand proof that this statement holds true.

In conclusion, we learned the majority from our research from what respondents were refraining from saying. We were forced to assume why many students were reluctant to admit to being victims of sexual abuse. Although we got a lack of diverse responses, utilizing the sources we found, we were able to find a trend in our data and conclude that everyone has the potential to be a survivor of sexual assault. Whether or not respondents are comfortable sharing this information is subjective. Because of these findings, it is important for us as a group to educate this campus about what needs to happen when combating sexual violence. Giving individuals a strong support system within the campus will allow for a more open environment, which is something that this community needs desperately.

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Plan

The overall purpose of our project was to bring awareness to University of Denver's campus and educate people on the prevalence of sexual assault on their own campus. When speaking of more specific goals, allowing people to see that sexual violence is not gender exclusive is another major theme shown through the data we have collected and will be sharing with those people who chose to participate in our action plan. Connecting our action plan and our community-based research project is a huge part of our over-arching theme. In our plan, we are showcasing real numbers as well as real data when educating individuals on their campus. Although there will be some general statistics present, it is important to us for participants to see how sexual violence can really happen to anybody, no matter how "safe" you feel on your own campus.

For our project plan, we will be spending about an hour in Driscoll Hall where many students walk through their way to class. We will create a table with flyers provided to those who wish to educate themselves on sexual assault and how to prevent. Prior to our intervention, we will post flyers around campus notifying people that we will be in Driscoll. These flyers will also include some statistics that we found in our research. We will include a gumball demo with 3 different colors: males who feel they've been sexually harassed/assaulted/raped, females who feel they've been sexually harassed/assaulted/raped, and a third color including those who feel they have not felt anything. The Information about how to prevent sexual assault and our data will be in visuals of pie charts and graphs to more dramatically and clearly show our information.

In order to make our booth audience appropriate, we must first figure out who our target audience is. Our target audience is the DU community, but more specifically the DU student population. Our whole project is dedicated towards educating the students on sexual assault/harassment and helpful tips to prevent it. In order to reach the majority of the student body we must make our booth both appealing and appropriate for the students. We must also place our booth in an area where a lot of the student population passes by, and with the cold weather setting in we decided Driscoll Bridge would be perfect. We don't want to overwhelm the students with too many things going on at once, but we also want to display enough to create interest. We will do this by hanging two or three poster boards off the front of the table with our data in fun eye-catching colors. Hopefully these posters will draw them in and make them want more information. Then as the student approaches the table they will see two distinct sides. One side is dedicated towards our data on sexual assault and its relation to gender norms. We will provide a demonstration with candy in a jar. We will have a question with display and see what people think it represents. On that side of the table we will also have a sheet that talks about our data and

secondary research along with a little sheet dedicated to quick facts about the topic that they can take with them. The other side will be about prevention. We will have another data sheet for people to look and some commonly used objects that can also work as weapons laid out on the table. We will demonstrate how to use these items against an attacker. We will also provide another flyer with prevention tips for the students to take with them when they leave our booth.