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# Violence and Voicelessness: Experiences of Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence on College Campuses

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## Abstract:

Media coverage of sexual assault on college campuses has resulted in an uprising of social media campaigns and student activism. The student-led movement has called for extensive policy changes in higher education. However, intimate partner violence (IPV), has fallen to the margins and not received the same attention. Consequently, the survivor-centered movement and policy changes have centered the experiences of only a certain type of survivor, making it difficult for IPV survivors to seek justice and support from their institutions. Furthermore, the movement has largely failed to take into account the intersections of social identity and how marginalized social identities are accounted for within school policies and services. In this thesis, the experiences of college student survivors of IPV are centered and their experiences with whom they have worked with and sought support from are examined intersectionally, both in experience and identity. The purpose of qualitative interviews with student IPV survivors (n=24) is to better understand their experiences receiving services from their schools and working within these systems. Of the 24 students interviewed, 18 did not receive the help or support that they needed from their school. Based on their experiences, this thesis argues that within intersectional theory both identities and experiences are marginalized within the violence prevention movement.

## What I learned:

I initially approached this project with a preconception that only marginalized identities excluded survivors from getting the help they needed from their institutions. However, although that first part is still largely true based on research I conducted and previous studies done, it is not only identity that prevents survivors from getting the help they need, but also experience. Throughout my interviews I found time and time again that systems in place at the University of Michigan designed to help survivors were only efficient for certain experiences with sexual misconduct. Survivors that had not experienced isolated incidents of sexual assault or rape and instead had been in or were currently in abusive dating relationships experienced victim-blaming, lack of knowledge, and insufficient long-term support from providers on campus. Because the study participants largely held dominant social identities (being white and heterosexual with male partners), I concluded that marginalization of experience and marginalization of identity could exist separately, but were not always mutually exclusive.

## The Role of the UM Library Grant:

The money I received from the UM library was essential to my research. It was used for compensation of participants, and without the additional funding I would not have been able to recruit as many participants and gain as wide of a spectrum of perspectives as I did. Through this funding the library has participated in the compensation of survivors, which I believe to be incredibly important when sharing their stories of abuse and trauma, as well as to the creation of feedback that will be used by providers in the future to make services more inclusive to all survivors.