

# UC SAN DIEGO CENTER ON GENDER EQUITY AND HEALTH

## Assessing the Environment for Campus Violence Prevention in California

### Background

The proposed project will be led by researchers from the Center on Gender Equity and Health (GEH) in the Department of Medicine at the University of California San Diego (UCSD) School of Medicine. All work is funded by a grant to GEH-UCSD from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). A qualitative approach will be used to assess the knowledge, attitudes and factors surrounding promotion of sexual health and the prevention of sexual assault, sexual harassment and dating violence on three University of California campuses: UC Los Angeles (UCLA); UCSD, and UC Santa Barbara (UCSB). This study will involve an in-depth examination of the interplay of individual, interpersonal, and structural (cultural, community, and institutional) factors that shape intimate relationships and sexual and interpersonal violence among UC students on these three campuses. We will explore perceptions of students (undergraduate, graduate and professional), faculty members, staff and administrators, and community stakeholders (such as staff from local rape crisis centers) as they pertain to sexual and intimate relationships and opinions of how the campus and surrounding environment promotes safety and interpersonal well-being.

### Main goals at each campus

**Goal 1: Assess undergraduate, graduate and professional students' perceptions of the campus environment related to sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking and dating violence.** We will conduct up to 30 in-depth interviews (IDIs) with undergraduate students and up to 20 IDIs with graduate students [including graduates and medical/other professional students (n=10)]. The goal of these IDIs is to understand perceptions about the campus environment for safety, opportunities for healthy socializing and sexual and relationship violence. Critical to this objective is the exploration of students' definitions of healthy vs. unhealthy relationships; healthy vs. unhealthy sex; sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking and dating violence. We aim to learn from students about their feelings and opinions related to what is happening at their campus, overall and in the #MeToo era. Topics will include conversation on whether students feel sexual/dating violence is a problem at each campus; how they think their university handles and responds to sexual violence against students. Participants will be asked about the kinds of information they have received about sexual violence since coming to the university and if they have heard faculty, staff, or administration talk about/address sexual assault.

**Goal 2: Assess how undergraduate students define and contextualize sexual consent, to refine campus climate survey scales and improve prevention programming.** Little to no research exists on how undergraduate college students understand consent, either as a static procedural definition useful to Title IX offices or in criminal justice contexts, or as the arguably more important ongoing process that takes place within any given sexual encounter. Nor does any data exist on how different types of students (i.e., freshmen vs. seniors, members of Greek life, student athletes, etc...) may hold different understandings of consent as part of their social "micro-cultures." We propose to assess how students define and understand sexual consent to improve campus prevention education on nonconsensual sex; and to develop valid scales for measuring consent in a climate survey.

**Goal 3: Explore how students feel institutional and community arrangements influence their lives and experiences.** We will conduct approximately 5 FGDs with undergraduate students, 4 FGDs with graduate students and medical and other professional students to explore their awareness of and opinions about the services, protocols and policies related to sexual violence that are available on their campus and in the surrounding areas. Student participants will be asked to discuss their understanding of the availability of services, prevention programs, and/or policies addressing sexual violence at UCLA, UCSD and UCSB; and provide their opinions on how students at their campus can become more involved in making the school an environment that does not tolerate any form of sexual or gender-based violence.

**Goal 4: Explore how faculty, staff/administrators and community stakeholders feel campus infrastructure influences students' lives and experiences.** We will conduct up to 35 structured interviews with staff and administrators (n=15), faculty members (n=15), and community stakeholders (n=5) to understand the role they or their offices play in addressing and/or preventing sexual violence and dating violence at their University. Faculty and key staff and administrators (e.g., from the Title IX Office, CARE Office, the Office of Student Affairs, etc.) will be asked to discuss how they perceive their role and their office's role in services, prevention, and/or policy addressing sexual violence on campus. Faculty/administrators who indicate they work with survivors will be prompted to discuss the process they take when a student discloses; and to describe which resources they think students should be most aware of that they offer. Community stakeholders, such as staff from local rape crisis centers, will be asked for their perceptions of how UC-community organization relationships can be strengthened and enhanced to improve prevention of sexual violence in and around each campus.

## Data collection team on each campus

All research planning, recruitment of participants and data collection will be done by individuals trained in the conduct of qualitative research, research ethics, and the practice of conducting safe and ethical research on sexual health, intimate relationships and sexual violence. All researchers will have a deep understanding of the sensitive and potentially distressing nature of this domain of research. Further, all research staff will be trained on available resources and programs for health, sexual and reproductive health, sexual and dating violence, and counseling and psychological services on the campus, and surrounding areas.

## Qualitative data collection methods

**In-depth interviews** (IDIs) will involve an interviewer and interviewee and will be conducted in private, at a location of the participant's choosing. Each interview will last 60-90 minutes and will involve the use of a semi-structured guide that outlines questions but allows for deep exploration into topics that emerge. Participants will provide written consent and will retain a copy of the form for their records. Written notes will be taken during data collection, by the interviewer. The session will be digitally recorded if consent is provided by the participant. All IDI participants will be compensated \$20 for their time.

**Structured interviews** will involve an interviewer and interviewee and will be conducted in private, at a location of the participant's choosing. Each interview will last 30-60 minutes and will involve the use of a structured guide that outlines specific questions to be answered. Most questions can be answered with short, open-ended responses. Participants will provide written consent and will retain a copy of the form for their records. Written notes will be taken during data collection, by the interviewer. The session will be digitally recorded if consent is provided by the participant. All IDI participants will be compensated \$10 for their time.

**Free listing interviews** will involve an interviewer and interviewee and will be done to gather rapid data about sexual consent. The interviewer will approach students, introduce him/her/themselves and the project and ask the student to list all the items they can think of that relate to the topic. Each interview will last approximately 15 minutes. Students will provide oral consent to participate. Those who do not provide consent will not be asked questions. No compensation will be offered.

**Online survey interviews** will be conducted via the Internet, to systematically gather data on understandability, accuracy, appropriateness, and clarity of sexual consent items generated during free-listing interviews. All responses will be confidential and the survey questionnaire will be rapidly deployed and completed by the participants. An online consent will be provided. All participants will be compensated \$5 for their time.

**Focus group discussions** (FGDs) will be conducted to complement IDIs and will benefit from group discourse surrounding the exploration of core ideas and research questions. FGDs will allow for discussion of general themes, including community-level knowledge, attitude and practices. Individual experiences and behaviors will not be focused on in group sessions. Focus groups will be led by a moderator and notes will be taken by an assistant who will record each session (if all participants provide consent). All discussions will be organized by use of a semi-structured guide that provides questions and prompts but does not need to be followed exactly. Each FGD will be done in a central location on campus, will last 1-2 hours. All FGD participants will be compensated \$10 proposed for their time.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like more information about this study, or to collaborate with us on its success, please contact the Principal Investigators of this research at UC San Diego.

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