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Title IX on the Hill

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College of the Holy Cross **Worcester, Massachusetts**

The Thesis of

Riley Peck **entitled**

Title IX on the Hill

is submitted to the office of Scholar Programs in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with College Honors at the College of the Holy Cross, and has been read and approved by the following:

Advisor

Reader

Director of College Honors

Title IX on the Hill

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College Honors Program

College of the Holy Cross

May 2024

Abstract

This thesis seeks to answer the question, "What does Title IX mean at the College of the Holy Cross?" It considers and triangulates the words and experiences of students, faculty members, and Office of Title IX and Equal Opportunity (Office) administrators to gauge the understandings and potential misconceptions of available resources and the College's culture. Further, it draws upon archival analysis to situate the Office in a broader historical context of the College and also includes an auto-ethnographic component. This thesis concludes with general suggestions the Office and the College at large to more efficiently combat sexual violence and support victim-survivors.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Renee Beard, for believing in me and assisting in constructing, conducting, and analyzing a mixed-methods approach to my research. I remember almost giving up on this topic when I could not seem to find a faculty member to guide me through the thesis writing process. I am so grateful for your openness and courage in tackling such a sensitive topic with me, especially as a student outside of your department.

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To all students, faculty members, and Office of Title IX and Equal Opportunity administrators who participated in my research, thank you for candidly sharing with me your thoughts and experiences. I appreciate your honesty and bravery and I firmly believe that the time you dedicated to this study will benefit future students and faculty members.

To Professors Sheehy, Jenkins, and Lipsitz, thank you for shaping my academic and personal interests and for continually supporting me throughout my career at the College. I look up to your commitments to both social justice and the community.

To Elizabeth Drexler-Hines and Jillian Kelley, thank you for showing me that change is possible and that my voice matters. Thank you for making the Hill a safer, more inclusive space. I hope to follow in both of your footsteps after graduation.

And to you, the reader, thank you for taking the time to learn more about how we can cultivate a safer environment for students atop Mount Saint James, an environment where no one *ever* needs to remember their pepper spray.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Title IX, ratified in 1972, prohibited sex discrimination in federally-funded educational institutions. Initially, Title IX ensured that women students received the same treatment and opportunities as their male counterparts, especially in athletics. However, for the past decade, Title IX has legally protected American students from sexual violence. Almost paradoxically, victim-survivors[1] often choose not to report their experiences to campus Title IX Offices. In reality, the issue of sexual violence obviously extends far beyond any legal policy or administrative office. Analysis of sexual violence through a psycho-social lens requires the consideration of: the cultural norms that fall short of discouraging sexual violence, the social identities of affected parties, the political mechanisms that often fail to serve justice to victim-survivors, and the psycho-social experiences and effects of trauma and perceived betrayal. This chapter will broadly explain sexual violence and relevant legislation, ultimately applying the discussion to the College of the Holy Cross (College) and its Office of Title IX & Equal Opportunity (T9&EO).

Sexual Violence Legislation

Title IX

By way of historical background leading up to Title IX legislation, the US Department of Justice notes that:

[1] I will use the term "victim-survivor" to refer to any individual who has experienced sexual violence. "Victim" is consistently used in legal settings, while the term "survivor" has been adopted by advocates in efforts to empower these individuals. Acknowledging that individuals who have experienced sexual violence may not identify with the same term, I will use a combination "victim-survivor." It is important to note here that individuals who have experienced sexual violence may not identify with *either* term (Hirsch & Khan, 2020), but I will maintain this terminology to ensure clarity and distinction against those who have not experienced sexual violence.

> As the women's civil rights movement gained momentum in the late 1960's and early 1970's, sex bias and discrimination in schools emerged as a major public policy concern. Women, who were entering the workforce in record numbers, faced a persistent earnings gap compared to their male counterparts. As a consequence of the equality in the workforce debate, Americans also began to focus attention generally on inequities that inhibited the progress of women and girls in education (DOJ, 2024).

Title IX, formally known as Title IX of the Educational Amendments of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, was ratified on June 23, 1972 by former President Nixon. It states,

> No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Title IX carries the spirit of the 14th Amendment, which asserts that no person may be denied the "equal protection of the laws," by specifically prohibiting sex discrimination. According to RAINN, "Under Title IX, officially titled the *Patsy T. Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act*, survivors of sexual violence can legally hold their schools accountable for keeping them safe. Title IX applies to all colleges and universities that receive any federal funding, including student financial aid" (https://www.rainn.org/articles/title-ix).

Considering the vagueness of the 37 words listed above, the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) created regulations to guide institutions in upholding their Title IX obligations. Congress passed the regulations on July 21, 1975, which conveyed the "force of law" in court. These regulations involved "designation of responsible employees, adoption of grievance procedures, along with comparable facilities, reasonably equal financial assistance, and equal participation for athletics among the sexes" (Carpenter & Acosta, 2005).

The mandatory compliance date for Title IX in institutions of higher education

was set for 1978. Government officials hoped that this six-year period would provide institutions the time to alter its existing practices to align with Title IX. Unfortunately, Title IX was very loosely enforced by the late 1970's, so many institutions were, in fact, out of compliance with its terms.

Further clarification emerged with the policy interpretations of Title IX in late 1979, which provided a measurement to the fairness of institutional practices (Carpenter & Acosta, 2005). One helpful way to understand Title IX and its subsequent regulations and policy interpretations is to view the law as a "mission statement," the regulations as its "goals," and the policy interpretations as the "yardstick for measuring goal attainment" (pp. 13, Carpenter & Acosta, 2005).

Initially, Title IX most notably advanced women's collegiate athletics. Men and women's athletic programs were entitled to "substantially equal" (according to the policy interpretation) financial aid dollars to offer to prospective athletes.[2] Aside from equitable participation, Title IX requires that women's athletic programs receive equitable treatment, as well. Equitable treatment includes a consideration of available facilities, equipment, field time, locker rooms, travel, and publicity (Carpenter & Acosta, 2005).

In 2011, a "Dear Colleague" letter written by the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights of U.S. Department of Education broadened the definition of sex discrimination to include sex-based discrimination, a term that includes both sexual harassment and sexual violence. The argument behind this lies within the notion that any sexual violence, even just one instance, creates a hostile environment for the survivor. By outlining several requirements to which institutions of higher education must adhere, this Letter forced

[2] In 1998, the OCR clarified "substantially equal." This does not mean that a woman soccer player must receive the same scholarship as a man soccer player, but that the women's athletic programs must maintain the same amount of potential financial aid as men's programs.

colleges and universities across the country to acknowledge and handle instances of campus sexual violence or risk financial penalities. Such requirements involved creating a notice of nondiscrimination, appointing a Title IX Coordinator, and establishing a grievance procedure to report violations (Ali, 2011). This "Dear Colleague" letter and a 2014 Q&A document codified sexual violence as a Title IX issue under federal guidance.

Clery Act

Jeanne Clery was raped and murdered in her college dormitory in 1986. Working to provide a more transparent view of campus safety, her parents advocated for political change that eventually came to fruition as the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security and Campus Crime Statistics Act (Clery Act) of 1990. This legislation necessitates that institutions of higher education produce and distribute a public annual security report (ASR) to community members annually on October 1st. The ASR must include data from the preceding three years on criminal offenses, hate crimes, Violence Against Women Act offenses, and arrests and referrals for disciplinary actions. Further, institutions are required to send to the community Timely Warnings when crimes mentioned in the Clery Act occur and Emergency Notifications when a significant danger exists. Lastly, the Clery Act obliges institutions to administer prevention education, inform victims of crimes of their rights, and hold disciplinary proceedings (Clery Center, 2023).

Campus Sexual Violence Act (MA)

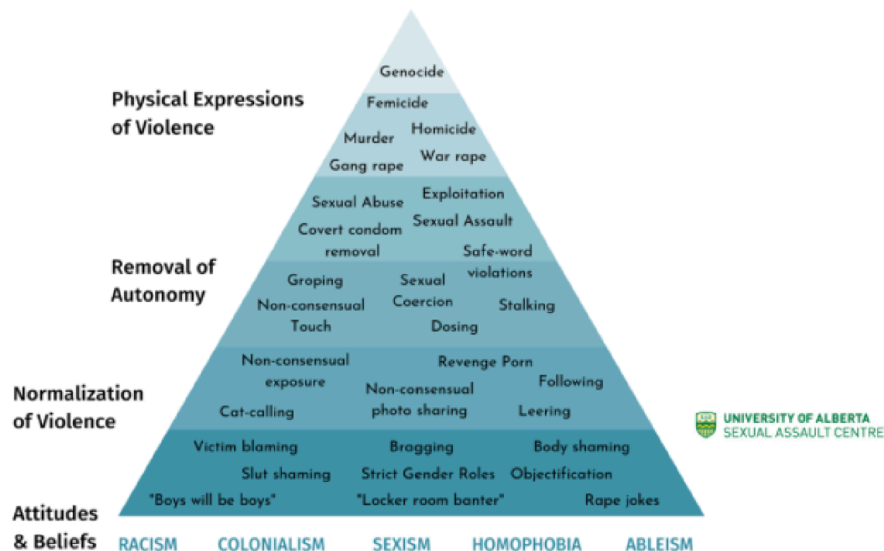
The Campus Sexual Violence Act (CSVA), codified at General Laws Chapter 6, Sections 168D and 168E, became Massachusetts state law on August 1, 2021. Signed into law by former Governor Charlie Baker, this legislation has since been referred to as

Massachusetts' "version of Title IX" (Lannon et al., 2021). Piggybacking off the federal Clery Act, the CSVA places increased responsibilities upon educational institutions to inform campus communities about sexual violence. First, institutions are required to issue campus climate surveys every four years to further gauge not only experiences of sexual violence and other crimes, but understandings of policies and procedures in place. Further, institutions must post their sexual misconduct policy to their website and disseminate it to students annually by August 20th. New students and employees must undergo training that thoroughly discusses sexual misconduct prevention within 45 days of beginning at the institution. Lastly, institutions must send annual reports of sexual misconduct investigations to the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education before December 1 each year (Lannon et al., 2021). Title IX, the Clery Act, and the CSVA show that colleges and universities across the country are required to comply with federal and state legislations, which may differ from state to state.

So, What is Sexual Violence?

Sexual violence is an umbrella term used for any nonconsensual, sexual act. This includes, but is not limited to: sexual harassment, completed or attempted penetration (rape), unwanted sexual contact (groping), and stalking. For consistency purposes, I will consider intimate partner violence (IPV), or physical, mental, or emotional abuse committed by an intimate partner, as forms of sexual violence, as well.

Sexual violence exists on a continuum, exemplified by the "Pyramid of Sexual Violence" created by the University of Alberta (2024).



This illustration shows how certain attitudes and beliefs (e.g., racism and sexism) contribute to a “normalization of violence” (e.g., cat-calling and leering), the “removal of autonomy” (e.g., groping and stalking), and ultimately, “physical expressions of violence” (e.g., rape and murder). Rape and murder are certainly socially unacceptable. However, occurring more often, harmful attitudes, comments, and actions are frequently brushed off and left unaddressed. These seemingly small attitudes, comments, and actions all contribute to a culture of sexual violence. Educators suggest that holistic sexual violence prevention requires a confrontation with deep-rooted beliefs and long-accepted social behavior so that further harm may be avoided.

Nevertheless, as previously referenced, different states have different legal definitions of sexual violence that can be prosecuted in court. For instance, under Massachusetts law, sexual assault is defined as rape or indecent assault and battery. Rape occurs when a person has

> sexual intercourse or unnatural sexual intercourse with a person, and compels such person to submit by force and against his, her or their will, or compels such person to submit by threat of bodily injury and if either such sexual intercourse or unnatural sexual intercourse results in or is committed with acts resulting in serious bodily injury, or is committed by a joint enterprise… (MGL c.265, § 13, as cited by College of the Holy Cross, 2024c).

Indecent assault and battery occurs when a person makes physical contact with another in an "indecent" manner, including on their genitalia, buttocks, or breasts (MGL c.265, § 22, as cited by College of the Holy Cross, 2024c).

Despite varying levels of legal legitimization, I recognize that all forms of sexual violence are inappropriate and destructive. I will use the "Pyramid of Sexual Violence" as a template in analyzing the sexual violence culture at Holy Cross. For the purpose of my study, explicit acts of sexual violence are nonconsensual, sexual acts. Furthermore, a culture of sexual violence is one that engenders certain beliefs, norms, or customs that promote (or fail to prevent or address) sexual violence.

Sexual violence happens all around us. Due to underreporting, actual statistics of sexual violence are unknown. The current statistics are thought to be underestimated. An American is sexually assaulted nearly every minute (https://www.rainn.org/statistics/scope-problem). One in three women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime, in comparison to one in six men (https://www.rainn.org/statistics/scope-problem). Parents warn their children, "don't talk to strangers," and young women are encouraged to use the "buddy system." However, contradicting the fear bred by such statements, the vast majority of victim-survivors know their perpetrators. Eighty percent of rape perpetrators are known to the victim-survivor, as 39% are acquaintances, 33% are current or former intimate partners,

6% are multiple perpetrators or the victim cannot remember, and 2.5% are non-spousal relatives (https://www.rainn.org/statistics/perpetrators-sexual-violence).

As frequently explained by scholars and victim-survivor support organizations, perpetrators of sexual violence seek to gain and maintain power and control over their victims (Keenan, 2011; Pathways for Change, 2024). According to sociological analysis, however, Scully and Marolla's (1985) seminal study on "the rewards of rape" found that the convicted rapists they interviewed had motives far beyond simply power and control. The authors reported that offenders have at least six reasons for committing rape: 1) Revenge, punishment, collective liability of women; 2) As an added benefit (to robbery); 3) Sexual Access; 4) Impersonal sex and power; 5) Recreation and adventure; and 6) Feeling good. Ultimately, in this study, men perceived rape as a rewarding, low-risk act. In the context of the U.S. being the most rape-prone of all nations, the authors ask us to consider not *why* people rape, but why the majority of people *do not* commit rape?

Using an intersectional lens to examine this problem, individuals with one or more marginalized identities face disproportionate rates of sexual violence.[3] Though all genders can (and *do*) experience sexual violence, cis-gender women are at a higher risk than cis-gender men. As previously stated, one in three women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime, in comparison to one in six men (https://www.rainn.org/statistics/scope-problem). Sexual minority women are at a risk of sexual violence twice greater than that of heterosexual women, and sexual minority men, despite their gender identity, are at a risk of sexual violence nine times greater than that

[3] The term "intersectionality" was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. It encourages both academia and society to consider *all* elements of an individual's identity and how they may "intersect" with one another to curate different experiences. For instance, viewing an undocumented, Hispanic woman through an intersectional lens would require consideration of at least citizenship status, race, and gender.

of heterosexual men (Beaulieu et al., 2017, as cited by Miodus et al., 2023). Individuals who do not conform to the traditional gender binary (e.g., transgender, non-binary individuals) face sexual violence at a rate of one out of two (Office for Victims of Crime, 2014). Furthermore, more than two in five Native American or Alaska Native women are raped during their lives (CDC, 2024). The lifetime prevalence for sexual violence for Native American, Alaska Native, and non-Hispanic multi-racial women ranges from 32% and 67% across the various categories (Basile et al., 2022). Demonstrating the compounding effects of marginalized identities (in this case, gender and racial identity), transgender people of color experience more sexual violence than transgender white folks (Staples & Fuller, 2021, as cited by Miodus et al., 2023). Targeting those who belong to one or more marginalized group demonstrates that perpetrators of sexual violence seek to dominate both by gender and race/ethnicity. These statistics show that analysis and understanding of victimization requires a consideration of the identities held by all parties involved.

Sexual Violence on College Campuses

Nearly 25% of female college students (Cantor et al., 2017, as cited by Miodus et al., 2023) and 6.8% of undergraduate and 2.5% of graduate male students (Cantor et al., 2020, as cited by Miodus et al., 2023) report having experienced sexual violence. The unique circumstances of college life, including living apart from home and family for the first time and in close proximity to peers, participating in substance use and/or party culture, becoming sexually active, and wanting to be liked or desired by peers, all render college campuses “perfect storms” for sexual violence (Hirsch & Khan, 2020).

The Red Zone

The “Red Zone,” or “freshman fall” (Hirsch & Khan, 2020), refers to the time period between August and November during which over 50% of college sexual assaults are reported. First-year students are specifically at risk (https://www.rainn.org/statistics/campus-sexual-violence). The power imbalances that stem from the legal drinking age (21-years-old) and disproportionate control of campus spaces make underclassmen particularly vulnerable to victimization. For instance, underclassmen are not of the legal drinking age, so they often rely on upperclassmen to buy their alcohol. Because they are not yet 21-years-old, drinking is prohibited in the dormitories that underclassmen inhabit. This forces them out of their “own” space towards other, less familiar spaces (e.g., fraternity houses, sorority houses, and upperclassmen dormitories and/or apartments) to gather, party, and drink. Hirsch and Khan (2020) take this analysis one step further to explain that white, wealthy, heterosexual male students control and dictate a large majority of college life and refer to binge drinking as a “white man’s cultural practice” (pp. 74). These sociologists critique fraternities for “reproducing an unequal allocation of access to space, alcohol, and a specific vision of college fun” (pp. 74), though the same could arguably be said for other campus groups (e.g., athletic teams at Holy Cross). This predicament leaves underclassmen at the upperclassmen’s (typically males’ or “frat brothers’”) mercy, relying on them to obtain alcohol, host parties, and essentially create fun (Hirsch & Khan, 2020).

Alcohol Myopia

More than 80% of college students drink alcohol (Engs et al., 1996, as cited in Gervais et al., 2014), and 45% of college students report binge-drinking (more than four drinks in one sitting for women, and more than five drinks in one sitting for men) in the past two weeks (Hingson et al., 2009, as cited in Gervais et al., 2014). More than half of all convicted rapists report having drank alcohol before the assault, and nearly half of all victim-survivors report the same (Abbey et al., 2004). One study (Gervais et al., 2014) demonstrated positive relationships between heavy drinking and sexual objectification of women and between heavy drinking and sexual violence. A potential explanation for this well-documented association lies in alcohol myopia theory (Steele & Josephs, 1990). In principle, alcohol myopia theory refers to alcohol's social effects in three parts: drunken excess, drunken self-inflation, and drunken relief. Drunken excess is the tendency to act more freely, perhaps in an extreme manner; drunken self-inflation is the tendency to view oneself in a higher regard than usual; and drunken relief is the potential to alleviate psychological stressors. Researchers (Steele & Joseph, 1990) propose that these social effects result from inhibition conflicts, in which drinkers are unable to detect all situational cues and therefore, act according to the most salient. This leads to impaired judgment and decision-making. In communities where a majority of members partake in this mind-altering activity, it comes as no surprise that communication lines are blurred and boundaries are crossed.

Hookup Culture

Along with partying and drinking, college has long been associated with casual sex, or, in more colloquial terms, "hooking up." Lisa Wade (2017a) conducted

qualitative research among college students and published her groundbreaking findings in a book titled, *American Hookup: The New Culture of Sex on Campus*. One student referred to college as a "big four year-orgy" and shared that she "believed that college was a wild, sexual party scene, and that to fit in, you had to be into alcohol, weed, and sex" (Wade, 2017b). Wade explains that hookup culture could be considered a win for second-wave feminism, as it allows women to take ownership of their bodies. Despite this, however, only 15-25% of college students actually *like* hooking up. Similar to Hirsch and Khan (2020)'s analysis, Wade posits that this low percentage of students often includes the most privileged: white, wealthy men. Typically, these individuals hold the most social capital on campus and face the least societal consequences for their behavior. Hookup culture arguably contributes to campus sexual violence, as students often enter with the weekend with the expectation of sex and the assumption that sex is "not that big of a deal."

Sexual Violence in the Catholic Church

Similar to college campuses, the Catholic Church has its own history of sexual violence (in particular, the sexual abuse of minors). In recent years, many state attorney generals have opened investigations into clerical sex abuse. The current reports show that there are 163 perpetrators in Missouri, 97 in Florida, and 188 in Kansas (Graham, 2023). As one of the largest religious institutions in the world, the Catholic Church boasts both global influence and a 2,000-year history (Keenan, 2011). However, some Catholic customs and beliefs, particularly around sex, have been contemporarily

considered archaic. According to the Church's magisterium, individuals should not have sex for pleasure:

> Lust is disordered desire for or inordinate enjoyment of sexual pleasure. Sexual pleasure is morally disordered when sought for itself, isolated from its procreative and unitive purposes (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1997, para. 2351).

Individuals should also not have sex with individuals to whom they are not married:

> Fornication is carnal union between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman. It is gravely contrary to the dignity of persons and of human sexuality which is naturally ordered to the good of spouses and the generation and education of children (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1997, para. 2353).

Lastly, sex should only occur between a man and a woman:

> Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures … tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered."[141] They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1997, para. 2357).

Compounding its strict views on sex[4], the Church requires that priests and clergy members commit to a life of celibacy. Already, this policy creates a dichotomy between "Holy" and "Unholy" by putting religious devotion and sexual activity in tension with each other. The Church's exclusionist policies continue, forbidding women to become priests or clergy members, promoting heterosexual relationships, and denouncing both premarital sex and divorce.

Almost paradoxically, a staggering number of sexual abuse allegations against priests and other Catholic leaders arose in the 1960's and continued through the 1980's (Graham, 2023). Sexual violence in the Catholic Church is a clear example of how

[4] Saint Augustine of Hippo, whose beliefs have become the crux of Catholic teachings on marriage and sexuality, once stated that "'the inability to control the genital organs becomes a punishment for sin inscribed in the body'" (Fagan, 2009, p. 20, as cited in Keenan, 2011)

sexual violence functions as an abuse of power. In these cases, victim-survivors were minors, and therefore, unable to consent,[5] when the abuse took place. Next, abusers stood in high status in both the Church and the community. They often were influential in the victim-survivors' relationships with God. This reputation allowed priests to spend time alone with children without much question from others and undoubtedly confused the young, impressionable victim-survivors.

A common thread in many of these cases, and perhaps another symptom of power and status, is an attempt by the Church to "cover up" the abuse. Oftentimes, when allegations against a priest were reported to his higher-ups, they were simply transferred to another parish. Unfortunately but unsurprisingly, this failed resolution only allowed the abuse to perpetuate and/or happen to others (Keenan, 2011). In environments deeply-embedded with power imbalances such as the ones discussed above, community members ultimately rely on one another and their respective institutions for safety. The next few paragraphs will explore what happens when this responsibility is not upheld.

Effects of Sexual Violence

The effects of sexual violence upon victim-survivors are many. Physically, victim-survivors are at risk of becoming pregnant or contracting a sexually-transmitted infection (STI), depending on condom or contraceptive use during the assault. Anywhere between 7,750 and 12,500 pregnancies may occur each year after a rape (https://www.rainn.org/effects-sexual-violence). The average lifetime cost of rape per

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[5] The age of consent in the United States varies from state to state, but it is generally 16-18 years old. In Massachusetts, the age of consent is 16-years old (MGL c.265, § 23).

victim-survivor is $122,461, including legal services, therapy and/or emotional services, medical bills and/or treatment, and more (Peterson et al., 2017).

Psychologically, victim-survivors may develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). A clinical diagnosis of PTSD requires a traumatic experience, intrusion, avoidance, negative thoughts or mood, and changes in behavior.[6] According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* 5th ed. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), PTSD symptoms may include: intrusive thoughts, memories, or dreams of the traumatic event; avoidance of or attempts to avoid thoughts or "external reminders" of the event; misplaced blame upon oneself or others, hopelessness, detachment, disinterest; and sleep changes, irritability, difficulty concentrating, and recklessness. Ninety-four percent of women who have been raped in the past two weeks will develop short-term PTSD (https://www.rainn.org/articles/post-traumatic-stress-disorder). Moreover, sexual violence is known to trigger the onset of other mental conditions, such as anxiety and depression, as well (Carey et al., 2018 as cited by Miodus et al., 2023). As victim-survivors navigate their healing journey, relationships with friends and loved ones may become strained (https://www.rainn.org/effects-sexual-violence). For students, sexual assault is correlated with dropping out, transferring, and maintaining a lower grade-point-average (Molstad et al., 2023). It is important to note that each victim-survivor is, of course, unique in how they choose to move forward and cope with their assault.

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[6] The most recent *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), published in 2013, includes sexual violence as a traumatic event that may preclude the development of PTSD.

Why Don't Most Victim-Survivors Report?

Despite the prevalence of sexual violence, these instances are heavily underreported to formal institutions. Only 31% of all sexual assaults are actually reported to authorities, and only 2.5% of perpetrators are ever incarcerated (https://www.rainn.org/statistics/criminal-justice-system). Since the 2010's, the body that handles these cases on college campuses are Title IX Offices. Although most students know about Title IX Offices on campuses, they often deliberately choose not to use their services (Holland & Cipriano, 2021), especially if they have experienced sexual violence in the past (Holland, 2020). Stunningly, it is estimated that 90% of campus sexual assaults are not reported (Fisher et al., 2000, as cited in Miodus et al., 2023).

Victim-blaming

The popular term "rape culture" refers to cultural practices and customs that encourage rape and sexual violence (Scully & Marolla, 1985). "Rape culture" is enforced by victim-blaming attitudes. Victim-blaming is somewhat self-explanatory: individuals place the blame for the assault upon the victim-survivor rather than the perpetrator, such as by ascribing the onus to women for being intoxicated or wearing "provocative" attire. This perception arguably requires a certain level of rape myth acceptance (RMA). Rape myths include, but are not limited to: the victim-survivors was "asking for it" (based on how much alcohol they consumed or what they wore); or the victim-survivor gave consent because they never said "no" or put up a fight (Washington University, 2023). Victim-blaming may occur due to at least two psycho-social phenomena: the fundamental attribution error and belief in a just world (Inman, 2015). The fundamental attribution error occurs when we underestimate the power of the

situation and attribute certain events to an individual's personal characteristics instead of circumstantial characteristics (Ungvarsky, 2023). Belief in a just world refers to the view that everyone gets what they deserve (Lerner & Simmons, 1966, as cited in Catlin & Scherr, 2022). As a defense mechanism, the fundamental attribution error allows outside individuals to distance themselves from the situation and maintain the false notion that sexual violence would never happen to them because they are not like and/or do not act like the victim-survivor (Inman, 2015). On the other hand, the belief in a just world would prevent individuals from blaming the perpetrator because they are unable to understand how bad things can happen to good people and therefore, they believe that the victim-survivor *must* have done something wrong in some capacity (Catlin & Scherr, 2022). Interestingly, those who have experienced sexual violence have more unjust world beliefs than those who have not (Catlin & Scherr, 2022). This shows that trauma, specifically sexual violence, can alter an individual's perception of the world and can even assist in empathizing with others who may have shared experiences.

A rape culture can engender self-blame in victim-survivors. Women with an increased RMA, the degree to which they believe victim-blaming misconceptions regarding sexual violence, indicated that they are less likely to use campus services after an assault (Holland, 2020). In this instance, the victim-survivors' decisions not to report their assaults relate to a distorted belief that the perpetrators are not fully at fault. From these data, one can infer that the victim-survivors feel that there was something that they could have or should have done to prevent their assault from happening. Believing that they hold some responsibility in their experience would undoubtedly deter a victim-survivor from utilizing formal reporting avenues. Especially in intimate social

circles and communities, victim-survivors may have difficulty comprehending that a friend or peer or otherwise esteemed individual would be capable of committing such harm.

Institutional Betrayal Theory

Another explanation for underreporting may lie in institutional betrayal theory. Coined by psychologist Jennifer Freyd in 2008, the term institutional betrayal stems from the concept of interpersonal betrayal. By definition, interpersonal betrayal occurs between close individuals and constitutes a violation of trust. Victim-survivors who were assaulted by a trusted individual surely encounter this phenomenon. Institutional betrayal, on the other hand, occurs between an individual and an institution to which they belong (churches, schools and universities, political systems, and armed forces) and similarly constitutes a violation of trust. Concerning college campuses, administrator' actions and inactions may magnify the trauma experienced by victim-survivors (Smith & Freyd, 2014). Interestingly, women with previous experiences of sexual violence are less likely to use formal campus services (Holland, 2020). When analyzing this, one must question the differences, beyond the assault itself, between women who had previously experienced sexual violence and women who had not. If an individual has never experienced a form of sexual violence, it is less likely that they have ever interacted with formal institutions than an individual who *has* experienced a form of sexual violence. It is reasonable to assume that those who had previously experienced sexual violence already felt a sense of institutional betrayal, or perhaps even felt the lack of institutional response exacerbated their pain, thus dissauding them from choosing to use formal resources again.

Institutional betrayal functions by "himpathy" and gaslighting (Bedera, 2024). Philosopher Kate Manne first penned the word "himpathy" in 2018 to encompass "the inappropriate and disproportionate sympathy powerful men often enjoy in cases of sexual assault, intimate partner violence, homicide and other misogynistic behavior." "Himpathy" exposes a widely-held, gendered bias that men's violence against women is tolerable, while holding a man accountable for these actions is a "shame" (Bedera, 2024). Manne (2018) provides two, well-known examples of men who have succeeded thanks to "himpathy:" former President Donald Trump and Justice Brett Kavanaugh. On a national stage, both men were accused of sexual assault, yet allowed to serve in the most powerful and prestigious positions in the country. On college campuses, a similar phenomenon takes place. Research (Dicardo, 2021, as cited in Bedera, 2024) shows that colleges and universities often place men and men's interests over women's. When it comes to Title IX cases, administrators elicit "himpathy" because of their efforts to bolster young men into a successful and fulfilling future. This stems from the United States' patriarchal history, in which men's achievements, contributions, and needs have long been deemed more important than women's.

My Research

My thesis will use qualitative interviews to answer the question, "What does Title IX mean at the College of the Holy Cross?" My experiences on campus as a student leader suggest that, despite the improvements the Office of T9&EO has undergone in the past decade, students and faculty still feel uncertain about the legalities of Title IX and the specific functions of the Office. Professional (Catanzano, 2019; Smith & Gomez,

2022) and student (Inman, 2015; Dapaah-Afriyie, 2022) reports have analyzed the sexual violence culture at Holy Cross and audited the College's efforts to prevent and resolve instances of sexual misconduct. My research will continue to examine the "gap" (Inman, 2015) between both the College and the Office of T9&EO's efforts and the persistent, campus-wide misconceptions surrounding Title IX legalities, roles, and responsibilities. While these reports mainly focus on students, mine will triangulate the existing research by including both faculty and Office of T9&EO members in its analysis. By expanding the conversation, my research will highlight both sexual violence prevention and education as everyone's responsibilities, not just those of students.

The next Chapter, the Site Overview, will explain and contextualize the College's history and discuss past academic research on sexual violence, specifically at the College. Chapter 3 will describe and justify the methods I have employed to conduct my research. Chapter 4 will present my findings, highlighting the differences and connections between participant groups. Chapter 5 will summarize the research and provide general suggestions for the College to cultivate a safer environment for community members.

Chapter II: Site Overview – College of the Holy Cross

The College of the Holy Cross is a Jesuit, liberal arts institution located in Worcester, MA. It served exclusively males from its establishment in 1843 until 1972. Although progress in community diversification has been made, the College largely remains a predominantly white institution. Out of the 3,197 undergraduates enrolled at the College in Fall 2023, 55% were female, 22% were students of color, 38% were from Massachusetts, and 3% were international students (College of the Holy Cross, 2024h).

Religion

In 1843, Bishop Benedict Joseph Fenwick founded the College of the Holy Cross under the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), a Catholic order valuing social justice (College of the Holy Cross, 2024d). Since then, the College's Ignatian values have remained integral to its identity. It was only in 1925 that the number of lay faculty members (31) surpassed the number of Jesuits for the first time (College of the Holy Cross, 2024e) and only in 2022 that the College's first lay President, Vincent Rougeau, J.D. was inaugurated (College of the Holy Cross, 2024a). As discussed in the previous Chapter, the Catholic Church maintains rather strict beliefs about sex. The College, along with other Jesuit institutions, aligns with these principles. Students generally understand that Health Services cannot provide birth control without a medical reason and that groups and departments affiliated with the College cannot distribute contraceptives. Furthermore, previous prevention education materials that used Planned Parenthood consent acronym, "F.R.I.E.S.," was altered to a non-affiliated, College-specific acronym (J. Kelley, personal communication, Spring 2024). Nonetheless, as discussed, esteemed members of the

Catholic Church have faced allegations of sexual violence, particularly child sexual abuse, in recent decades. These allegations were institutionally "swept under the rug" and rarely met with real consequences or justice for victim-survivors. After all, if sex cannot be acknowledged or discussed, how can sexual violence be acknowledged or discussed? The Catholic Church's culture of silence around sex, and subsequently sexual violence, undoubtedly finds its place upon Mount Saint James.

Race

Fr. Thomas Mulledy, S.J. was the first President of the College of the Holy Cross from 1843 to 1845. However, before his leadership stint at the College, Mulledy served as the Maryland Provincial and oversaw the sale of Black slaves by the Society of Jesus in the 1830's. Since the early 1700's, Black slaves worked on Jesuit plantations in Maryland. Mulledy's decision to sell the Jesuits' slaves – instead of freeing them – generated criticism and prompted his resignation as Maryland Provincial. He remained in Europe until 1843, when Bishop Benedict Fenwick asked him to lead the College (Holy Cross Mulledy/Healy Legacy Committee, 2016). Put simply, the College's first President contributed to the African American slave trade.

James A. Healy, a legal, mixed-race slave who unofficially passed as White, was the College's first valedictorian in 1849. James and his brother Patrick F., another alumnus of the College, inherited their family's slaves. After the Fenwick Hall fire in 1852, Patrick (who had since taken a vow of poverty as a Jesuit) donated $2,300 from the sale of his family's slaves to the College's rebuilding efforts. In this way, the College directly benefited from the slave trade. Further ingraining the Healy brothers' legacy,

Healy Residence Hall on Easy Street is named for James (Holy Cross Mulledy/Healy Legacy Committee, 2016). This name demonstrates the Healy brothers' ever-presence atop Mount Saint James.

In 1966, Mulledy Residence Hall was dedicated to Fr. Thomas Mulledy, S.J (College of the Holy Cross, 2024f). However, after a further exploration of the College's history, administration moved to rename Mulledy to Brooks-Mulledy in 2016. In 2020, it was renamed Brooks altogether to honor former President Rev. John E. Brooks, S.J. '49 who was influential in integrating the campus (Holy Cross Mulledy/Healy Legacy Committee, 2016). After Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in 1968, Fr. Brooks committed to diversifying the student body and traveled across the country to recruit Black high school students (College of the Holy Cross, 2024i). This name change illustrates a confrontation with the College's racist history.

Presently, multicultural student organizations (MSOs), like Black Student Union, Advocating Student Interests in Asia, Caribbean African Student Assembly, and many more, foster relationships and a sense of belonging for students of color (College of the Holy Cross, 2024b). Annually, these groups hold popular events, like Noche Latina and Fashion Shows, in cultural celebration. However, not all community members always demonstrate fervent support for MSOs. An article (Kessler, 2023) in the *Fenwick Review,* the College's Catholic and conservative independent journal, questioned these groups' financial budgets granted by the Student Government Association. The author writes,

> ...the Holy Cross campus, represented through SGA, in an effort to fuel inclusivity to ease the liberal guilt they possess, obsess over the approval of multicultural groups and identity based organizations. The budget is a pure reflection of that, alienating those who are not a part of these groups, and using the student activity to disproportionately fund it.

Clearly, despite the College's attempts to diversify and integrate, there exists a disconnect between its efforts and community perception. Students of color continue to express feelings of isolation and separation. They indicate a need for more structured support (Peña, 2024). One student explains,

> I feel like I've never felt completely comfortable on campus, like, ever…and that's just stemming from being at a PWI [predominantly white institution]. It's kind of the expectation when you come here. …it feels like you are disrupting the norm.

Recall that the College was initially an all-white institution and its first president supervised the sale of Black slaves. As proven by student voices above, this legacy persists and creates an inherent power imbalance among community members.

Co-education

In the late 1960's, the co-education debate arose at Holy Cross as women's national social status improved. Contradicting an otherwise "inclusive" move, stake-holders framed the decision as advantageous, both socially and academically, to the men at the College. Perhaps the strongest evidence for women's intended utility to men before co-education were the "cattle calls" that involved bringing busloads of women to campus for social events on the weekends (Cahill, 1993). In 1970, former President Brooks announced that the College would accept women as students, and in 1972, the College welcomed its first class of around 300 women (College of the Holy Cross, 2024f).

In her book, *Women on the Hill* (1993), Ann J. Cahill sought to illustrate women's experiences as Holy Cross students during the first twenty years of co-education (1972-1992). Cahill explains that the initial residential quarter for women was a hallway

on the top floor of Mulledy Hall (now renamed to Brooks Hall).[7] This physically separated women from men, as Mulledy sat on the outside of upper campus and was furthest away from academic buildings and other dormitories. With men in administrative positions continuously making significant choices for women students without feedback or consultation, women felt "patronized and isolated" (pp. 30) and that it was their "duty" (pp. 32) to critique the College's harmful policies. Throughout the years, women reported feeling disrespected and sexually objectified by men at the College:

> Women students were rated on their physical appearance by male students in Carlin holding up placards with numbers from one to ten and calling out to those women as they went from Kimball back to their own dorm (pp. 149).

Women also reported facing discrimination in the classroom and reduced to stereotypes, as one alumna puts it:

> Until I got to Holy Cross, I had no idea of what sex discrimination was. I never would have identified myself as a feminist. I was very much against feminism until I got to Holy Cross, at which point I became an ardent feminist … I do remember some discriminatory statements. Oh, what do you want to put all the time going into graduate school for? After all, you'll probably end up just having babies – statements along those lines … And there was no one to discount that in sight [i.e., no women scientists] (pp. 150).

Fortunately, the College's first Women's Organization (renamed Women's Forum in 1984 and Feminist Forum in 2016) to discuss relevant these issues and establish a safe space for women was formed in 1973 (College of the Holy Cross, 2024f).

In concordance with the Title IX, field hockey and basketball became the first women's athletic teams in 1974 (College of the Holy Cross, 2024f), though Cahill (1993) candidly highlights the struggles female athletes faced in gaining administrative

[7] Students colloquially referred to this area as "the vault" until recently, when the wall and ID-activated door between the two halls was removed and Brooks 4 became a co-ed floor.

recognition and support. At the time of *Women on the Hill*'s publishing in 1993, the College maintained eleven varsity and two intramural sports for women. One alumna notes,

> Virtually every women's sports team … came into existence because of the persistence and assertiveness of the women who were committed to the idea of a female athletic program (pp. 115).

In the classroom, womens' grades were higher than mens', but expressing their full intellectual capacity was equated to "taking a social risk" (pp. 56) or being "perceived as less feminine" (pp. 54). Evidently, there existed a tension between being academically successful and being perceived as attractive or likable. These anecdotes illuminate the true impossibility of womanhood at the College.

Sexuality

Given the catechism's strict teaching on sex[8], individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ have long encountered hardships on Mount Saint James. *In, Out, and About on the Hill* (Nickoloff, 2010) spotlights lesbian and gay students' experiences at the College between 1980 and 2003. Before the 1990's, lesbian and gay students did not openly discuss their identities, further contributing to the culture of silence around sex. In 1992, the Chaplains organized a support group for gay and lesbian students. On March 24, 1997, the Association of Bisexuals, Gays, and Lesbians (ABiGaLe) wrote a letter "To Whom This Concerns," saying,

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[8] "Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures … tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered."[141] They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church,* 1972)

> At Holy Cross the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community does not have a face. The oppression we experience comes partly from people who do not know whom they oppress. Closeted students who live in fear and isolation because of homophobia and heterosexism have no idea who their gay, lesbian, and bisexual brothers and sisters are. We may more effectively work against such harmful ignorance if we can stand up and speak for ourselves instead of being spoken for. Instead of feeling frustrated over our anonymity, we may take pride in our autonomy.

ABiGaLe was officially recognized as a student organization on December 1, 1997. Currently, PRIDE, an MSO, serves to educate the campus community about issues faced by LGBTQ+ individuals and provide a sense of belonging. Less is known about transgender or non-conforming student experiences at the College.

Class

Moreover, the College, requiring a $78,600 tuition for the 2023-2024 academic year (College of the Holy Cross, 2024h), attracts primarily affluent students. Approximately 71% of students come from the top 20% of highest paid families in the United States, with the median family income of a student resting at $170,700. Approximately 13% of students come from the top 1% (Chetty et al., 2017, as cited by The Upshot). Such stark class divisions create power imbalances among students, as some can "afford" to make mistakes, while others cannot. This directly relates to T9&EO cases, as some students would have the financial capacity to hire a lawyer, while others would not.

Sexual Violence on Mount Saint James

Research is limited regarding the history of sexual violence and sexual violence prevention at Holy Cross. The first reported instances of sexual assault (that I could

locate) at the College occurred in 1980 and 1988 and are detailed in *Women on the Hill*.[9] In 1980, a first-year student had reported that she had been assaulted by three fourth-year students. A lack of evidence rendered the Dean of Students' Office (the body that presumably dealt with these matters at the time) unable to determine institutional consequences for the alleged perpetrators. However, in response to this report, the College organized the Committee on the Status of Women, composed of all-women members (Cahill, 1993). In the April 18, 1980 edition of the *Crusader* (now known as *The Spire*), student authors explain paradoxical results to a campus survey:

> The survey indicates that women do feel unsafe to a certain extent, but there is still a false sense of security. This discrepancy is evident because a large amount of women report that they do feel safe on campus – yet these same women acknowledge their awareness of physical abuse cases on campus (Goucher, as cited in Cahill, 1993).

Despite these results, some students took to an editorial to express their disagreement:

> At Holy Cross people are nice. They smile at you when they pass you on the street. They go to mass on Sunday. They wear nice clothes. They don't smoke, at least not tobacco. They don't rape… ("Rape at Holy Cross," as cited in Cahill, 1993).

This comment demonstrates an inability to accept and acknowledge that community members are capable of rape and/or sexual violence.

A second assault was reported in Spring 1988, in which the perpetrator entered an unlocked residence hall and raped a first-year student in her room. The perpetrator was never identified, so it is unknown whether or not this individual was a campus member. This prompted the College to implement a new security system still in use today, one that requires students to swipe their identification cards to enter residence halls. Despite the

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[9] It is important to reiterate here that, despite the College's establishment in 1843, the first report comes less than a decade after women were allowed at the College (1972).

fact that these incidents elicited institutional responses, neither victim-survivor was served legal or institutional justice (Cahill, 1993).

Presumably the first of the College's sexual misconduct policies was found in the 1984-1985 Student Handbook, situated between the two assaults, titled "Notice of Policy on Sexual Harassment." It reads,

> Members of the Holy Cross community who engage in sexual harassment are subject to discipline, up to and including expulsion or dismissal. Generally, sexual harassment is described as offensive and unwelcome sexual conduct (e.g., physical contact, written or verbal comments/suggestions), which adversely affects persons in their working or learning environment. Anyone who believes she/he has been sexually harassed is encouraged to discuss the matter first informally with one of the appropriate offices at the College, the purpose of this meeting being to determine the seriousness of the situation and the best means of addressing the problem. Some members of the community who may be consulted are: administrators in the Academic Dean or Dean of Students Offices, members of the Counseling Center or Chaplain's Office, and the Affirmative Action Officer. Further information about this issue may be obtained by contacting the Office of the Vice-President (Simmonds, 1984).

Note the language "...the purpose of this meeting being to determine the seriousness of the situation and the best means of addressing the problem," suggesting that a formal process for dealing with and resolving issues of "sexual harassment" did not yet exist at the College. This language also suggests that instances of "sexual harassment" and the "best means of addressing the problem" were entirely subjective to the staff member to whom an individual spoke.

I could not locate any other report or document in the Dinand Library archives that explained sexual violence as more than a mere statistic in the annual security reports. However, a desire for more in-depth sexual violence prevention and education was evident in a proposal for a student group called Students for Heightened Awareness and Rape Education (S.H.A.R.E.) in 1989. The purpose of this group was

> to raise the awareness of both male and female members of the Holy Cross community about the problem of sexual assault on campus in hopes of both preventing sexual assault and helping victims of sexual assault (S.H.A.R.E., 1989, pp. 1).

Archival records of this group, including group members' names, are dated through 1992. After the College's short stint with S.H.A.R.E., the Relationship Peer Educators (RPE), students dedicated to the promotion of sexual violence prevention and awareness, were established in 1994. Evidently, throughout the decades, RPEs disseminated flyers with the "RPE Fact of the Week" pertaining to the College's sexual misconduct policy and consent education. Little information is known (or rather, available) regarding sexual violence prevention for the following twenty years.

Fast forward to the 2010's, governmental pressures to adhere to Title IX standards as explained in the "Dear Colleague" Letter (2011) and the subsequent Q&A Guidelines (2014) increased. Then President Boroughs appointed faculty and staff members to a committee called SAFER (Sexual Assault Facts, Education, and Response) in 2013. The College received a two-year grant from the Department of Justice to implement the University of New Hampshire's Bringing in the Bystander™ (BitB) to first-year students throughout the 2014-2015 academic year. SAFER oversaw the implementation of this program. Through student-led research, it was determined that BitB improved Holy Cross students' bystander self-efficacy and lowered their Rape Myth Acceptance, though it did not improve their understandings of consent (Inman, 2015).

Before the publication of the "Dear College" Letter in 2011, official bodies that dealt exclusively with sexual violence reports virtually did not exist. Certain individuals on college campuses were tasked with handling general violence and misconduct (e.g., the aforementioned Holy Cross Dean of Students' Office from the 1980 sexual assault

case), though there was a general sense of confusion and vagueness around the process. At Holy Cross, students were unable to consistently and easily navigate the College's online sexual violence resources and expressed a desire for clearer formatting and an online reporting option (Inman, 2015). Further, students could not identify or explain the relationship and the differences between reporting to the College's resources or reporting to the Worcester Police Department. It can be gleaned that, in 2015, students felt uncertain about how to access and use sexual violence resources. According to the College's student-run newspaper, *The Spire,* the Office of Title IX Initiatives was founded in December 2015 under Director Elizabeth Canning (Noenickx, 2019a) in accordance with Title IX. By the end of the 2006-2017 academic year, Canning left the College. Tracy Kennedy assumed the Interim Director position and became the official Director of the Office of Title IX Initiatives in September 2018 (Noenickx, 2019a).

2018-19 Academic Year

Two faculty sexual misconduct allegations, the College's first – and only – ENGAGE summit, and a student-led sit-in outside former President Boroughs' office formatively marked the 2018-2019 academic year.

In August 2018, five former Organ Scholars at the College (Sean Redrow, Brett Maguire, Jeff Wood, Jake Street, and Jen McPherson) wrote to then President Boroughs disclosing sexual abuse and inappropriate behavior by the Distinguished Artist-in-Residence, James David Christie. Christie's role entailed close supervision of the College's Organ Scholars, students granted four-year, full tuition scholarships to play

the College's liturgies and other spiritual events. In a presidentially-appointed position, Christie worked under and reported to no one (except, that is, former President Boroughs). His publicly alleged abuse dates back to as early as 1994. In their letter, the alumni referred to Christie as "an imminent danger to students" (Redrow et al., 2018). The Organ Scholars took their story to the press, alerting the Boston Globe in late August 2018 (Noenickx & Cannon, 2018).

As campus tensions rose, an anonymous, student-initiated Instagram account @sexualassaultonthehill went live on November 5, 2018. The account's administrators shared hundreds of stories of sexual violence at Holy Cross, many of which were submitted through Instagram Direct Message by students (Noenickx, 2019a). Now, the account is no longer public, its bio reading, "This account is inactive and will remain on indefinite hiatus." For this reason, I am unable to access its posts. However, alumna Christine Dapaah-Afriyie '22's conducted a content analysis of this formative account in her Senior Sociology Honors Thesis. Dapaah-Afriyie found that out of 128 posts on the page, 103 referenced victim-survivor status.

The sexual misconduct allegation against Christie, the creation of @sexualassaultonthehill, and a bias incident on campus prompted the administration to cancel classes on the afternoon of November 13, 2018 to hold the College's first ENGAGE Summit. Nearly 1,000 students attended the sessions throughout the day to explore matters relating to respect, equality, and justice.[10] However, many, especially the curators of @sexualassaultonthehill, critiqued the Summit as a "catch-all event" (Noenickx, 2019a), emphasizing that recent events warranted several, specific

[10] Some sessions of the ENGAGE Summit included "Engaging the Community on the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct," "Community Healing," "Healthy Masculinity," and "Dear White People / Dear Straight People @ HC," facilitated by faculty, staff, and students alike.

discussions. Despite continued student efforts to continue this dialogue, the College has not held another ENGAGE Summit.

Before departing for Winter break in December 2018, the curators of @sexualassaultonthehill submitted a list of demands to the College administration "in an effort to improve current survivor-support infrastructure" (Curators of @sexualassaultonthehill, 2018). These demands included a report of all incidents since 2015, external investigations into Title IX matters, and clear procedures for handling faculty sexual misconduct allegations. This document was signed by hundreds of community members. However, happening privately in the background of rampant campus unrest, former Professor of Philosophy and Dean of Faculty was the subject of a 20-month Title IX Investigation. Throughout the investigation, which began in April 2017, this Professor maintained his roles as Dean of Faculty and Professor of Montserrat, a full-year course intended to foster first-year students' connection to themselves, each other, and their education. At this time, the Professor's interactions with female students were limited. Instead of returning to campus from Winter break in January 2019 to satisfied demands, the curators of @sexualassaultonthehill met with a *Worcester Magazine* article, detailing an alumna's experience of sexual misconduct and grooming by the Professor. The administration did not "inform the community in 2018 of the investigation, the finding of responsibility, or the sanctions against [the Professor]" (Noenickx, 2019a) (presumably because they were being sued by the Professor and were legally unable to disclose information). The Professor was only put on leave *after* the allegations against him were made public (Dapaah-Afriyie, 2022). Despite legal bounds,

this failure in both communication and adjudication undoubtedly contributed to a larger culture of mistrust towards College administration.

Fueled by long-held frustrations from the previous semester and anger towards the College's handling of the Dustin situation, students, including the curators of @sexualassaultonthehill, organized a protest. On February 4, 2019 at 10:00 A.M., students began an indefinite sit-in outside former President Boroughs' office in Fenwick Hall, pledging to remain until the College agreed to their new list of demands. They called for:

> an acknowledgment of the College's failure to alert the community about the allegations against Dustin, Dustin's professional removal, an external audit of the Title IX Office and the College's cultural practices, and a preliminary report from Phil Catanzano outlining the timeline of his investigation by March 1, 2019 (Noenickx, 2019b).

The sit-in lasted a collective 17 hours over two days, during which students spoke, displayed signage, danced, completed homework, shared snacks, slept on the floor, and journaled. With agreements to uphold the third and fourth demands made by the College of the Holy Cross Executive Team, the sit-in ended on February 5, 2019. To this day, this protest is "the largest demonstration in Holy Cross history" (Noenickx, 2019b).

Current Title IX Office

At the end of the 2018-2019 academic year, Tracy Kennedy left her post as Title IX Coordinator at the College. Students discovered this information through social media and word-of-mouth before an official email was sent by administration, days after faculty had been notified (Noenickx, 2019a). Following Kennedy's departure, the role was filled on an interim basis before a permanent replacement was named.

In January 2020, Derek DeBobes, J.D. was hired as the Director of the College's new Office of Title IX & Equal Opportunity. Notably, the COVID-19 pandemic, beginning in March 2020, forced colleges and universities to suspend in-person classes and send students back to their hometowns. Holy Cross students were not permitted to return to Mount Saint James until January 2021. Despite this, DeBobes expanded the Office of T9&EO by creating a prevention and education branch dealing not with specific cases and hearings, but rather providing comprehensive education to the community. Fulfilling these duties, Jill Kelley has served as the Assistant Director of Prevention and Education since Spring 2021. DeBobes also worked to house RPE within the Office of T9&EO. Previously an extension of Counseling and Psychological Services, RPE is currently advised by both the Office of T9&EO (Jill Kelley) and the Office of Student Wellness (Elizabeth Drexler-Hines). Since DeBobes' hiring, the College has developed an online option to report violations of either the College's Sexual Misconduct or Interim Equal Opportunity and Discriminatory Harassment policy. A student desire for this resource was specifically noted in 2015 (Inman, 2015) and its recent development thus indicates an accommodation to students' evolving requests.

Past Research

Two professional reports (Catanzano, 2019; Smith & Gomez, 2022) have analyzed the sexual violence culture at Holy Cross and audited the College's efforts to prevent and resolve instances of sexual misconduct. I will keep their observations and recommendations in mind as I interview other community members and formulate my own observations and recommendations from a student perspective. Ultimately, the most

recent report (Smith & Gomez, 2022) has given my research its "Why?" by stating, "As the College moves forward in implementation [of these recommendations], it will be important to continue to evaluate the evidence base that supports effective practices, including … academic research" (pp. 64).

Sexual violence on college campuses has also garnered student interest. At least three honors theses related to sexual violence have been produced by students at the College.[11] The results of one such project (Inman, 2015) supported the decision to invest in and require the BitB training for first-year students. In student-researcher Elizabeth Inman '15's words,

> Although we as an institution may feel that we are meeting our Title IX obligations in the current website, this mindset fails to consider the student perspective. As this study demonstrates, a gap remains between the College's perception of our resources and the way that students understand and use the information available to them (pp. 55).

My research will continue to examine this "gap" in knowledge and highlight what has improved and perhaps what has not.

More recently, Christine Dapaah-Afriyie '22 explored the historical memory of sexual assault (and the events of the 2018-19 academic year) at the College in her Senior Honors Thesis in Sociology. Starkly different accounts of this critical time period between alumni and current students highlight the consequences of forgetting and "moving on." Dapaah-Afriyie writes,

> Reminding the campus community that there was a time – not too long ago – when candid conversations about sexual violence and harassment *were* being had encourages an environment where individuals who do experience it are be more likely to disclose and possibly report (p. 102-103).

[11] This number does not include smaller, semester-long research projects (submitted for a class, for instance).

By nature of qualitative research, my thesis will promote a similar dialogue about sexual violence and hopefully empower victim-survivors to report their experiences.

Chapter III: Methods

Participants

Twenty-seven individuals participated in the study: 14 were students (Class of 2024 or 2025), one was an alumna, nine were faculty members, and four were T9&EO administrators. All participants were over the age of 18-years old. The primary recruitment model used for this study was convenience sampling. Participants (friends, teammates, classmates, faculty and staff members whom I know) were recruited for this research through word-of-mouth and e-mail. Participants were asked for names of other individuals who may have pertinent information, thoughts, or experiences.

Table 1A. Student Demographics

Pseudonym	**Class Year**	**Age**	**Gender Identity**	**Sexuality**	**Race / Ethnicity**
Rebecca	2024	21	Woman	Straight	White
Rose	2024	21	Woman	Straight	White
Will	2024	21	Man	Straight	White
Jillian	2024	21	Woman	Straight	White
Anne	2024	21	Woman	Straight	White
Elizabeth	2025	20	Woman	Bisexual	Latinx
Stacy	2024	21	Woman	Straight	White
Roger	2024	22	Man	Straight	White
Taylor	2023	23	Woman	Bisexual	White
Mary	2025	22	Woman	Queer	White
Sarah	2024	21	Woman	Straight	White
Gary	2024	21	Man	Straight	White
Kaylena	2024	22	Woman	Straight	White
Ann	2025	22	Woman	Straight	White

Of the students, 11 identified as women and three identified as men. The majority (13) were White, while one was Latinx. The majority (11) also identified as Straight, with three identifying as Bisexual or Queer. Students' class years ranged from 2023 to 2025.

Table 1B. Faculty Demographics

Pseudonym	**Years at the College**	**Age**	**Gender Identity**	**Sexuality**	**Race / Ethnicity**
Olivia	13	45	Woman	Straight	White
Margaret	18	55	Woman	Straight	White
Angela	9	42	Woman	Queer	Latinx
Anna	10	35	Woman	Straight	White
Bill	24	68	Man	Straight	White
Laura	17	50+	Woman	Straight	White
Chloe	24	50+	Woman	Straight	White
Barbara	x	x	x	x	x
Aria	x	x	x	x	x

Of the faculty members, five identified as women and one as a man. The majority (7) were White, while one was Latinx. The majority (7) also identified as Straight, while one identified as Queer. Faculty members' years spent at the College ranged from 9 to 24, with an average of 16 years. Two faculty members did not fill out the demographic survey, so their information is not included.

Table 1C. Title IX Administrator Demographics

Pseudonym	**Years at the College**	**Age**	**Gender Identity**	**Sexuality**	**Race / Ethnicity**
Gabby	3	29	Woman	Lesbian	White
George	4	41	Man	Queer	White

Lily	0	37	Woman	Straight	Black
Daniel	1	33	Man	Straight	Mixed

Of the Title IX administrators, two identified as women and two identified as men. Two were White, one was Mixed, and one was Black. Two administrators identified as Straight, while one identified as Lesbian, and one identified as Queer. Their years spent at the College ranged from zero to four years.

Measures

This thesis uses a mixed-methods approach to explore the inception, development, and current presence of sexual violence prevention efforts and the Office of Title IX & Equal Opportunity at the College of the Holy Cross. It includes an archival analysis of the Dinand Library Archives and Distinctive Collections to better understand historical campus happenings and early attempts at rendering Mount Saint James a safer place for all.

This thesis also includes qualitative research in the form of interviews (averaging 30 minutes) and focus groups to center community members' voices. The interview model (Appendix A.) sought to discern participants' understandings, perceptions, and feelings about the Office of T9&EO. These questions were not exhaustive of all topics discussed, as the conversation remained open and I followed-up with clarifying questions and points specific to participants' identities and roles on campus (e.g., if and how athletic participation has impacted understanding of sexual violence and/or sexual violence prevention). Moreover, by nature of true qualitative research, I inquired about issues that were raised by previous participants. Qualitative data was deemed most appropriate for this study because personal experiences are best told through dialogue,

audible and inaudible (such as body language, emotions, and the like). Exploratory qualitative methods allow respondents to discuss the matters of most importance to them rather than assuming what is relevant to cover. Surveys or other quantitative methods would reduce these unique and significant experiences and thoughts to numbers and completely remove the participants' voices. Interviews were recorded on the Olympus Digital Voice Recorder.

Lastly, as a community member and a student leader in sexual violence prevention and education, my research would be incomplete without a consideration of my own experiences and thoughts. Drawing from my roles as an RPE, the SGA Director of Sexual Respect & Awareness, a voting member of the Faculty Assembly, and a member of the Advisory Group to the Comprehensive Investigation Oversight Committee (CIOC)'s Recommendations Implementation Committee (RIC), I recorded personal memos intermittently during the study (e.g., after interviews) to both supplement and enhance my findings. I have also incorporated previous efforts and concerns into a larger, more general understanding of both the Office of T9&EO and sexual violence prevention at the College.

Procedures

First, archival analyses were conducted by visiting the Dinand Library Archives and Distinctive Collections and sifting through the folders provided by the archivists. Specifically, materials pertaining to Title IX, SAFER, RPE, ENGAGE, and sexual violence/assault were requested. Photos and scans were taken of relevant documents to ensure their integration into the discussion.

Next, qualitative interviews were conducted, and approximately 14 hours of interviews were recorded. For organizational and convenience purposes, students' interviews were conducted first, faculty members' interviews were conducted second, and Title IX administrators' interviews were conducted last. Occurring from November 2023 to February 2024, most student interviews were conducted in-person in various campus buildings, while most faculty and administrator interviews occurred over Zoom.

Analytic Strategy

The qualitative data was coded and analyzed via an interactionist, ongoing process (e.g., notes and memos were taken during and directly after interviews and also throughout the study). I chose sixteen of the most insightful interviews (e.g., my "Key Informants") to transcribe verbatim. I manually coded approximately 110 pages of transcribed data according to grounded-theory. I also coded six pages of personal journal entries. Common codes, or main themes, were those that emerged consistently across data to reveal a composite "story," or finding, across the study sample. These "Key informant" transcriptions were also coded by Dr. Beard to establish inter-rater reliability. Outliers are also included as relevant to study.

Chapter IV: Findings

The Broader Scope: Title IX through a National Lens

Faculty members and T9&EO administrators discussed various difficulties posed by Title IX as federal legislation. Faculty members referenced mandated reporting, neutrality, and lack of survivor-centricity. T9&EO administrators referenced neutrality and lack of survivor-centricity. Students also referenced a lack of survivor-centricity. Obviously, these challenges would be encountered at any institution of higher education across the United States, not just at the College of the Holy Cross.

Mandated Reporting

Faculty members recounted troubles, misunderstandings, and even disagreements with mandated reporting status. As mandated reporters at the College, faculty members are required to report instances of sexual violence to the Office of Title IX and Equal Opportunity. Almost all faculty member participants agreed that the mandated reporting process is "difficult," especially if a student wishes to keep their story private. Laura remarks,

> …The very nature of the conversation means that a presumption of a safe space has been established. And so to then have to switch gears into a responsible reporting, like a responsible reporter, in some ways feels almost like a betrayal of that safe space. So that part of it is really difficult. And I personally have had experiences where me making the statement that I'm required to make ends the conversation. And that's hard, right? It's just personally hard to not be able to do, to just be **constrained by policies that kind of rub against my own empathy (emphasis added)**.

Her use of the word "betrayal" directly reflects Jennifer Freyd's institutional betrayal theory (2008). Before a sexual violence case has even reached the desk of the Office of Title IX and Equal Opportunity, faculty members must inevitably betray

victim-survivors. Nonetheless, most faculty members who discussed mandated reporting felt that they must abide by the law, regardless of their emotions towards the student and/or the situation. Bill states,

> But it's hard because, yeah, you want people to trust you and feel comfortable with you and have a place to talk about these things. And they're welcome to do that. But they need to know first that you're a mandated reporter. So it's hard. But if you don't do what you have to do under the law, then you are in a tough spot.

On the other hand, two faculty members (X&Y) shared that they rely heavily on their moral compass when it comes to reporting sexual violence. Stemming from confusion about her mandated reporting status, Anna explains,

> So I think I'm a little bit uncertain about my role, but I think my role is to support students. So, you know, if a student were to come to me and share something, I'd probably say, you know, I might feel like I need to report this. Be careful before you say anything. And/or if something happened, I would certainly call Title IX and be like, do I need to report this? So, yeah, so I think I'm just a little bit uncertain about what's required of me, but I know what's required of me as an educator and a person at Holy Cross. So, I trust my gut and my instincts.

Barbara explained that she would not report a student's experience if they had requested that it remains private.

Interestingly, not *all* experiences with mandated reporting were negative. Aria narrated an instance in which a student disclosed to them with the understanding that they would need to report what they had heard to the Office afterwards. In this way, mandated reporting responsibilities worked as an aid in victim-survivor reporting for students who perhaps did not dare report on their own.

Neutrality

Faculty members and T9&EO administrators discussed challenges with the neutrality aspect of Title IX legislation and the subsequent operations of the Office. Margaret explained,

> So even as a determination panelist, right, there have been times, for example, when events are happening on campus or people want somebody to sign a letter or, you know, to do something. And I, you know, would say, well, I'm currently sitting on a panel. So I really have to maintain the objectivity and not want to give either of the parties a reason to appeal or dispute whether or not I was doing my job. So I realized that [the Office] has to do that every single day…

Here, Margaret identifies a disconnect between her personal aspirations and efforts to remain, or at least "appear," neutral to those involved.

In efforts to ensure due process, T9&EO administrators and staff members cannot provide emotional support to the distressed individuals, victim-survivors or alleged perpetrators, with whom they may interact in their role. When asked about this unique position, Daniel responded,

> My initial intention was to help people. When folks come with trauma, suffering, like I wanna tell them like, hey, you're gonna be okay. I wanna sit there with them … [now,] I just get to listen. But then there are roles for a therapist to interject and help and the purpose is to help them heal. And I definitely find myself wanting to do that, but that's not really what I'm supposed to be doing. I'm just collecting their accounts.

Again, this statement reveals a deliberate decision to damper the human desire to help and empathize in favor of remaining impartial. This finding is consistent with Hochschild's (1979) theory of "emotion work," arguing that people are often forced to manage their emotions due to "feeling rules" about what is appropriate in a given context. Involved parties must monitor their emotions and emotional expressions. It is interesting

that the Title IX reporting process requires individuals to compromise their most basic human instincts.

Despite this awkward position, Daniel goes on to commend the neutrality of his role:

> That's something else I am very satisfied with, that I treat everyone the same way. I don't know that I want to compare the suffering of a victim versus an alleged perpetrator, but I think whether someone made a mistake and did something awful, they probably feel terrible about that. I think if someone didn't do something, but they've been accused of something, that probably feels awful. And I think, I don't know, maybe I feel perhaps less bad for someone that did something that doesn't feel bad about it. But I think being on both sides of our process is stressful.

Here, Daniel clearly engages in "emotion-management" (Hochschild, 1979), as he works to treat everyone, no matter the situation, with dignity and respect.

Lack of Survivor-Centricity

Participants from all three sub-groups believed Title IX legislation does not center survivors. At institutions of higher education, the Title IX process exists to serve justice according to collected evidence in sexual violence cases. Although Offices of Title IX are not courtrooms, the rights of all parties still apply, including presumption of innocence. Unfortunately, sexual violence cases often lack hard evidence and come down to "he said-she said," thus disallowing Title IX administrators to find the alleged perpetrator responsible. Legislations after the 2011 Dear Colleague letter[12] have resulted in varying rules regarding testimony, hearing format, and cross-examination of the victim-survivor. These rules have not always considered victim-survivors' struggles

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[12] In 2011, a Dear Colleague Letter written by the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights of U.S. Department of Education broadened the definition of sex discrimination to include sex-based discrimination, a term that includes both sexual harassment and sexual violence.

retelling their traumas or sitting in the same room as their abuser. Gabby, a T9&EO administrator, captures the tension between macro-level lawmakers and the individuals who are directly impacted by their decisions,

> But I think that oftentimes at the federal and state level, survivors are not at the table when laws are being passed, not always, but I think more often than not. And so sometimes laws get passed that aren't actually helpful to survivors specifically, or in the same kind of breath, aren't helpful to like higher education, because also higher education professionals are not at the table when these laws are being passed either. So there's that dissonance between makes it sometimes that we're trying to fit into this box that the federal or state government has said we need to fit into, but it doesn't really make sense in a day to day setting.

On the Hill: Title IX through an Institutional Lens

All three participant groups raised issues of Title IX and sexual violence specific to the College. First, students, faculty members, and T9&EO administrators convey varying interpretations of campus resources. For students, this leads to a sense of mistrust. Secondly, students and faculty members gain Title IX-related knowledge from leadership positions and firsthand experiences with student victim-survivors. Thirdly, all three participant groups do "emotion work" around the sexual violence issue, whether as victim-survivors, advocates, supporters, or T9&EO administrators. Lastly, a harmful "Holy Cross culture" perpetuates sexual violence and makes being directly or indirectly involved with sexual violence particularly difficult.

"Who's going to protect us?": Misunderstanding of Campus Resources

Misunderstanding of campus resources was evident across participant groups. Students largely misconstrued the role of the Office of T9&EO on campus. Students and

faculty members both expressed uncertainties about community sexual violence training, community relations with the Office, and formal Title IX proceedings after a report is filed.

From my sample, all but one student participant expressed knowledge of the Office of Title IX and Equal Opportunity handling matters of sexual violence at the College. However, a majority of students indicated their presumption that the Office and its functions existed to aid and support victim-survivors of sexual violence. Students frequently used helping verbs, like “support,” “help,” and “protect,” when describing its role on campus.

> …I think knowing that there is a process, a reporting process that is not just like following the legal procedures, but is there for, like, supporting victims is important (Roger, ‘24)

Comments like these highlight a gross misunderstanding among a majority of students about what the Office is meant to do and the tasks it is required to fulfill. The Office actually does not provide direct support to students, nor does it necessarily protect them from harm. Instead, the Office investigates cases of potential Title IX or Equal Opportunity policy violation and provides parties with either a finding of responsible or not responsible. Daniel, A T9&EO administrator, acknowledged this popular misconception during our interview:

> Yeah, I think probably the biggest [challenge] is everyone in the community doesn't understand, kind of our, role and they put expectations on us that wouldn't be for us to solve for. Like I've had my students say, like you're supposed to stop these things from happening. That's not exactly what I do.

Daniel’s observations indicate that this “helping” perception is so strongly-held that it is communicated during case proceedings.

A majority of students also cited sexual violence prevention and education as primary duties of the Office, with many mentioning the work and visibility of the Relationship Peer Educators (RPEs).[13]

One student, a varsity team captain, learned about the Office's involvement in matters of sexual violence *during* our interview. After I explained recent Title IX legislation, Stacy ('24) stated

> …I thought like sexual violence was, I would not even think to go to Title IX for that. I thought that was like, you have to report that to, like federal [authorities].

When asked about instances that would concern the Office, Stacy responded,

> Yeah, since I've only ever associated [Title IX] with sports, I guess, if it was obvious in the athletic facilities that we were being treated lesser than a sports team. If [the men's team] was, I guess, pushed harder in lift, or their lifts were longer and more serious, and ours were just thought of as a joke, then that's when I would report it.

Although Stacy was an outlier in this sample, her comment demonstrates that the association of Title IX and athletic equality occasionally dominates its association with sexual violence, even nearly 15 years after the "Dear Colleague" Letter was issued.

Furthermore, students often looked for reassurance that their responses were acceptable or "correct" and expressed a complete sense of uncertainty (even those who had initially claimed they were "average" or "above average" in their Title IX knowledge). Often, students, consciously or not, used their interviews as learning opportunities. A representative sample includes the following:

> Is that even, is that even, like, a good answer? (Stacy, '24)

> I don't know, I actually don't know the protocols, but I guess if [someone] were to report their identity-based violence, they wouldn't have been able to remain

[13] The Relationship Peer Educators (RPE) are students dedicated to the promotion of sexual violence prevention and awareness, advised by both the Office of T9&EO and the Office of Student Wellness.

> anonymous. Is that the case with, like, sexual violence? Like, I don't even know… (Anne, '24)
>
> I guess I feel like I don't really think about faculty, but are they [protected by Title IX]? (Rose, '24)

These questions show that students remain unsure about aspects of the Office of T9&EO *beyond* simply its campus function.

I observed visible (e.g., putting head down, blushing) and audible expressions of shame when students could not answer a Title IX-related question or produce Title IX-related information that they felt was important. Verbal reflections of this include:

> Oh, that [the wording of the Title IX amendment] makes me feel like I should know (Roger, '24)
>
> That's so bad [that I didn't know Title IX was concerned with sexual violence] (Stacy, '24)

Students felt that they *should have* known the answers to my questions. I found this aspect of my student conversations particularly interesting, as it raises the question of where this shame originates and whether it is justified. Do students feel that they could have put more effort into learning this information? Should students need to intentionally seek it out, or should it be something that is easily accessible? Do students have a responsibility to educate themselves, or does the institution have a responsibility to require that it is learned and understood? I began asking participants these questions after these initial observations.

Unlike students, most faculty members used neutral verbs, "pursue," "manage," and "handle," in their descriptions of the Office's responsibilities. From this, I glean that faculty members hold less of an expectation for the Office to help and support the community. Perhaps this understanding stems from an advanced comprehension of legal

language and/or mandated reporting status. It is important to note here that students from the classes of 2024 and 2025 (i.e., 21- and 22-year olds) have never known college campuses without Title IX Offices and Coordinators, while many faculty members likely have. Arguably, faculty members would have observed the implemented changes as new Title IX regulations were developed. Perhaps current students entered college with higher expectations of the institutions to provide protection and support in matters of sexual violence compared to faculty members. Similar to students' expressed uncertainty, some faculty members also conveyed doubts in their answers. For instance, Laura asked "Am I right?" when explaining the role of the Office on campus.

Lastly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the T9&EO administrators expressed the most certainty and technicality in their responses regarding the Office's responsibilities and functions. Although most students and faculty could loosely identify the two-pronged responsibilities of the Office as handling cases of sexual violence and spreading awareness, T9&EO administrators also indicated policy review and development as a role of the Office.

Students were unclear about what relationships faculty members maintained with the Office. As highlighted above, Rose Thorn ('24) had no idea if faculty members were included in Title IX provisions. Additionally, Taylor ('23) described most of the campus training and sexual violence prevention as "peer on peer." She explained,

> I think talking about the boundaries and having a healthy relationship with advisors and teachers and coaches would definitely be very beneficial because I know numerous people who have gone through either some form of grooming or some other form of just manipulation or violence. And I think it would definitely be very helpful.

The lack of education about potentially-inappropriate faculty behavior sends two messages, accurate or not, to the community: one, that faculty members do not ever act inappropriately with students, and two, that no existing institutional body deals with these issues.

Similarly, faculty members expressed uncertainty about the training that students receive from the Office. One faculty member expressed,

> And knowing, knowing what training students are getting would also be helpful because I think what's really key is not just that we know that we're mandatory reporters, but that students also know that (Laura).

This quote highlights a faculty desire to learn more about the Title IX-related information disseminated to students. Although the required Bringing in the Bystander™ training for first-years does contain details about confidential and non-confidential reporting avenues, no efforts to present this to faculty and/or assess faculty familiarity with the material is in place to my knowledge. Aria shares this sentiment, stating,

> I think what I'm not familiar with is ways that the office has tried to mitigate that [frustration among involved parties] by providing supportive education services that allow people who are going to utilize that Office understand that there's caring that goes along with [the process]. I think too often it becomes very cut and dry.

Aria identified a concern that is central to my research. How much do students really understand the function of the Office, and what are they looking for when they file a report? Although they addressed different individual concerns, both Laura and Aria's comments exemplify a disconnect between the Office's efforts and how they are understood by the larger community. Moreover, students and faculty members who had not been directly involved in a Title IX case both conveyed uncertainty about the process following a report.

Mistrust

There was a deep sense of mistrust towards the Office among the community. Even one student who anonymously reported her coach's inappropriate behavior felt in the dark about the utility of her statements. For students, this sentiment perhaps originates from the widely held misconception that the Office exists for their benefit and protection. Jillian ('24) encapsulates this by stating,

> I'm not gonna go into too much for the sake of my friend, but my friend was raped and she did not get any sort of justice ... I have very little faith in them to make any real change.

For faculty members, the sentiment arguably originates from the bureaucratic place the Office holds. Laura puts it nicely,

> I get a sense that there's kind of a mistrust between faculty and Title IX, right? ... Any office that's main project is compliance is on behalf of the institution first and everybody else second.

Gaining Access to Knowledge Through Leadership and Firsthand Experiences

Another theme that emerged across students and faculty members is that they both gained access to Title IX-related knowledge through leadership. Faculty members who held administrative positions or sat on committees seemed to have an enhanced grasp on Title IX-related processes and legalities. They also described closer relationships with the Office administrators and staff. Similarly, students who served in leadership roles, like Orientation Leader, Resident Assistant, Relationship Peer Educator (RPE), cited a more advanced understanding of the Office's function on campus, along with stronger connections with the Office's staff members. Gary ('24) expressed,

> ...I feel, I think, privileged by that information [about Title IX] because the only reason why I've gotten it is because of the involvements that I've had with [Gateways] orientation and student government. So that's, I think, why that

> knowledge gives me confidence. But if I didn't have that knowledge, I think ... I'd feel hesitant in a way.

It is noteworthy that Gary referred to this knowledge as a "privilege," rather than a right to all community members.

Faculty members Aria and Barbara attributed their knowledge about Title IX and its proceedings to firsthand experience with student victim-survivors. Aria notes,

> But having to support my own students, it's really difficult, I think, because you and the culture that you're trying to create in your own life here at Holy Cross, you want quick action and you want decisive action and you know the reality of what's happening. You can see what's happening. This was an instance where I could actually had data to see what was happening. But that's not the office. And so there is some frustration tied up with that.

Other faculty members, like Laura and Anna, provided emotional support to student victim-survivors, but were unsure about the results or experiences of completing the Title IX process.

Emotion Work

All three of my participant groups, students, faculty members, and T9&EO administrators and staff members, reported doing what could be considered "emotion work." Sociologist AR Hochschild (1979) posits that people must "manage" or "deal with" their emotions in accordance with social rules. Based on participant responses that describe "dealing with" the emotions of sexual violence, Hochschild's theory applies here.

Oftentimes, the deeply ingrained power imbalances of academic institutions render students the most vulnerable to sexual violence. Recall the tumultuous events of

the 2018-19 Academic Year atop Mount Saint James in which two faculty members were accused of sexual violence by multiple former students. Although none of my participants specifically disclosed victim-survivor status, I know from past conversations with friends and aquaintances the emotional toll that sexual violence takes on the victim-survivor. From learning how to integrate the experience into the story of one's life to mitigating the psychological effects of trauma, the healing journey is far from easy. An experience of sexual violence undoubtedly requires emotion-management.

Students and faculty linked "emotion work" to advocacy. My personal advocacy on this campus has felt draining and has brought me close to burnout on multiple occasions. I cannot count the amount of times I've wondered, "I put all of my effort into this cause, and for what? For five people to show up for my Sexual Respect Week events?" or the amount of times I've sought emotional support from my therapist after hearing traumatic stories of rape and assault from peers. Juggling all of this internally but putting on a brave face to get through the day is the epitome of emotion-management. Emotion work is continuing to fight for justice for victim-survivors of sexual violence, even when peers and the institution fail to do so. Margaret, a faculty member, states,

> I think that is still a struggle with the expectations of women particularly with regard to things related to Title IX, right? That, that sort of women are maybe disproportionately doing the service work that's related to that, the emotional labor that's connected to that, right? If you're somebody who gets known for being compassionate in that space or being committed to those issues, the more you are asked to be, you know, sort of a part of them or entrusted with them, right? So, I think that that's something that we're still really working on. I still have hope … It can be a very painful place. I think I, I know that I still have hope because I still get hurt by all of these sort of failures.

Her poignant description of feeling “hurt” by the institution’s “failures” show that the impact of sexual violence on campus extends beyond just alleged perpetrators and victim-survivors: sexual violence hurts us all. Anna, another faculty member, shares,

> But I think we have a very patriarchal campus. There's toxic masculinity, which is huge in the world and particularly at Holy Cross. Like men aren’t involved in things [advocacy; having students report sexual assault to them] here. And I think that sucks. And particularly in relation to gender and sexual issues like men don't show up and that's terrible.

Presumably female faculty members are disproportionately sought out by students who have experienced sexual violence. Ann (‘25) expresses a similar sentiment with,

> ...I feel like a lot of the advocacy on campus is definitely done for sure by women. I mean, even looking around RPE, like the amount of applicants we get and the types of applicants we get…

Margaret, Anna, and Ann identify a gendered characteristic of females disproportionately advocating for sexual violence-related issues.

Faculty members also do emotion work through personally supporting student victim-survivors. Laura explains,

> But I do know that certain faculty, they just, I don't know if it's the topic they teach about or what they research or their demeanor or the kind of student groups they interact with. There's definitely, let's just say there's a heavier burden [of supporting student victim-survivors] on certain faculty members than on others.

A number of faculty members described the challenges in supporting their *own* students who they teach in class. Several faculty members recalled observing behavioral changes in their students who were either directly or indirectly affected by sexual violence. Here, female faculty members also disproportionately fill these roles. It is important to note that both advocacy and emotional support are forms of unpaid labor that require faculty to do emotion-management as well.

Interestingly, T9&EO administrators and staff do their own "emotion work" by managing the traumatic stories they hear and with which they interact. Daniel articulates his experience,

> ... there is an emotional toll [of the job] ... we have a front row seat to the suffering of other people. So there's second hand trauma that can build up. I think I feel like I am able to do the work and ... I can weather the emotional turmoil ... I think I'm well suited for the role, but it is something that affects you over time.

As previously stated, they also do "emotion work" in remaining neutral and treating all parties with respect.

These reports exemplify that sexual violence hurts everyone. Even the individuals to whom students look to solve these issues (accurately or not) must deal with the emotional consequences of sexual violence. A main implication of this thesis is to draw attention to and humanize the emotion work of T9&EO administrators and staff members, but it is also important to question how emotion work is uniquely hard for *all* members of the College of the Holy Cross community and why.

"The Holy Cross Culture"

An answer to the above question may lie within "the Holy Cross culture." A majority of my participants identified a harmful culture at the College that perpetuates sexual violence, a culture that has existed long before the establishment of the Office. Margaret, a faculty member, posits,

> I think the things that the Title IX office could do better on are things that the whole college is struggling to do better on. And I think it can be easy to say that our problems rest with that office rather than with a rape culture or a culture of academic power over students that's deeply problematic.

These troublesome characteristics include a culture of silence around sex, the tendency to "sideline women," a small size, and the siloed prevention efforts of the Office of Title IX and Equal Opportunity.

First, almost all of my participants discussed a culture of silence around sex. Of the participants who identified this issue, most connected this silence to the College's Catholic affiliation. It is widely understood that Health Services and student groups affiliated with the College are not allowed to distribute contraceptives. To this, I pose the questions: if we don't acknowledge sex on campus, how do we acknowledge sexual violence on campus? If we don't talk about sex, how do we talk about sexual violence? Gary ('24) posits,

> I was under the impression … that there are actually some students who come in [to the College] who literally don't know what sex is or how it works or how you can [have sex], let alone be safe, let alone have safe sex, but literally what are the basics of maturation? That's a unit that [some] students didn't have in middle school and then … and they didn't have it in high school, too. So I also think [the disconnect] is a compound issue of students who A) don't have sex education, and then are coming into college and are receiving information about how to have safe sex and how to give consent when they don't even have the basic understanding to be able to think about, let's prevent bad sex. Well, what does good sex look like, you know?

This finding is consistent with Christine Dapaah-Afriyie's (2022) thesis results: Students recalled feeling both dismayed and confused about the many disclosures of sexual violence experiences during the 2018-2019 Academic Year, given that no one had ever previously discussed these matters among peers.

The location of the Office on Hogan Campus Center (Hogan)'s fifth floor further exacerbates the culture of silence around sex, as victim-survivors, alleged perpetrators, and other community members must navigate what was referred to as the "secret

staircase." Aria poignantly coined this phrase in reference to the separate staircase one must take from Hogan's fourth to fifth floor, entirely exclusive from the main staircase that directly connects Hogan's basement and fourth floors. Most of my participants did not even know that Hogan had a fifth floor. This rather inaccessible placement of the Office reinforces the notion that sex and sexual violence must be dealt with and discussed in secret.

A majority of my participants identified deeply-embedded, patriarchal values at the College that fail to acknowledge the needs, contributions, and successes of women. Some participants cited the absence of a campus Women's Center, others cited the absence of women in leadership positions, and still others referred to the historical founding as a Jesuit institution in which women still cannot serve as priests. Aria, a faculty member, shared,

> I actually had a faculty member in my department, two of them [men], saying in my run-up to tenure, *oh, you know, we can teach your courses if you need to do a little bit more research, because that's where you should really focus.* They had no expertise in what I was teaching, none. And I was, it was offensive. I found it highly offensive that there was this idea that then they could free up time for me to all of a sudden magically do research that was going to make my case for me stronger.

Aria's comment illustrates feelings of patronization by her male colleagues.

I triangulated this finding with previous literature about the College, specifically Ann J. Cahill's *Women on the Hill* (1993). Cahill details how the co-education decision in the late 1960's was largely framed to benefit the men at the College, rather than to benefit women. Recall the College's inception as an institution by men, for men. Furthermore, in the first few years of co-education, Cahill explains that men in

administrative positions frequently made decisions that affected women without their consultation.[14] I again ask you to recall the College's inception as an institution by men, for men. Women were sidelined in 1843 during the College's establishment; they were sidelined in 1972 during the co-education transition years; and they continue to be sidelined in 2024, according to many of my student and, especially, faculty member respondents.

A majority of my participants discussed the challenges of attending and working at a small, intimate college. With just over 3,000 undergraduates and a 10:1 student to faculty ratio, it is not uncommon to see the same students in Kimball Dining Hall, in class, or off-campus during the weekend. Many cherish the tight-knit community atop Mount St. James and most highly value their close relationships with faculty. However, sexual violence complicates these communal relations. Allegations demand that we view friends, teammates, and colleagues as capable of committing sexual violence, all of which can cause pain and confusion. As Lily, a T9&EO administrator, puts it,

> …It can be a little challenging to be out there and make friends, but also keep a little bit of a distance knowing that that [an assault] could happen, especially in a small community.

Here, we see that *all* figures in the sexual violence issue, not just students and faculty members, have difficulties navigating the closeness of the College's community. What is the correct way to respond to victim-survivors and alleged perpetrators when instances of sexual violence inevitably come to our attention in such an intimate setting? Ann ('25) explains her personal experience seeing an alleged perpetrator on campus,

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[14] One example provided by Cahill involved the gracious addition of makeup mirrors in women's dormitories, while these dormitories were quite literally on the outskirts of campus, away from other peers and academic buildings.

> I know we brought this up but the fact that there is someone who is back on the campus who's been … like that makes me so angry and he's been to court multiple times. That just makes me so upset that … and obviously that's one instance of many, but the one that we know of who is so high profile. That just makes me so upset.

From Anne's words, a presumed failure of the T9&EO process has rippling effects in generating emotional responses of community members. This is especially difficult on the Hill, where students and community members often run in the same circles and perhaps even share a Residence Hall, Montserrat, or friend group. Further, this could be equally challenging when faculty members may have students report allegations to them about someone they have in their classes.

Sexual violence prevention is not yet everyone's responsibility at the College of the Holy Cross. Although the Office has expanded by adding an Assistant Director of Prevention and Education position, the community cannot solely rely upon this individual to improve our harmful culture and provide comprehensive prevention education to all players. Other campuses, albeit larger, have varying bodies that support marginalized individuals, especially those who experience sexual violence. For instance, University of Massachusett Amherst has a Center for Women and Community that offers support to sexual violence survivors through drop-in hours, creative activities, and opportunities for advocacy (e.g., medical advocacy, campus advocacy, police and court advocacy). The Center for Women and Community is staffed by professionals, graduate students, and undergraduate students, providing individuals from all areas of the University to immerse themselves in this work. Despite the College's small size, each community member

should commit themselves to sexual violence prevention in a similar way. As Lily, a T9&EO administrator, succinctly captures with a hypothetical,

> Or let's say someone makes a homophobic comment and it doesn't reach the level of a Title IX complaint. And we say, hey, you know, unfortunately this can't be filed here, but that doesn't mean you didn't do anything wrong. So I think what ... I would like to see is a higher comfort level in other departments with our colleagues to handle those issues on their own.

This individual's statement demonstrates a need for universal accountability in making our campus safer for all. Offensive comments and actions that may not reach the threshold for a Title IX or Equal Opportunity report are still hurtful and should be addressed in one way or another.

I noticed this disconnect firsthand when I studied abroad in France in Fall 2022. Walking the streets of Paris on a late summer night, I realized that if I, or if anyone I knew, were to experience sexual violence will studying abroad, I would have no idea where to report it or who to look to for support. In an email written to College staff members on September 19, 2022, I wrote,

> Before leaving the US, HC provided virtually no information about this drastic cultural difference [of sexual violence, in reference to overt sexual harassment experienced in France] …
>
> Along these lines, we were never informed how to report sexual violence abroad, who/what our resources are, etc. I know it would be difficult for the Study Abroad office to research policies/cultures of each specific country, but after all, these are places we are sending our very own students to live for a significant amount of time.
>
> Overall, I believe that the way the Study Abroad office addresses (or rather, fails to address) this specific symptom of culture shock is both naive and potentially harmful. Is there anything that I, or we, can do to improve this? I know it would probably be a great undertaking, but I would be willing to work on this while I am in France and, of course, when I return home.

I wished that I had received some sort of sexual violence training from the Office of Study Abroad before I left the States, but only when it was "too-late" did this occur to me.

Subjective Experiences: Title IX through an Individual Lens

Only one of my participants detailed personally reporting inappropriate behavior to the Office. Although the subjective experiences of Title IX did not emerge as a main theme among these data, I believe it is important to discuss this important outlier to spotlight victim-survivor experiences at the College. I will also draw upon my personal observations and emotions as an RPE.

Taylor ('23) detailed reporting inappropriate behavior by an athletic coach to the Office. Even during the process, she recalls feeling relatively confused about proceedings, noting,

> I wanna say I definitely felt lost. It wasn't something I was super familiar with. Even being given the training and getting the presentations [as an Resident Assistant (RA)], it's still, it's a lot to remember. And I think it's really intimidating when you're looking at it all in front of you, especially when it's something personal. I wouldn't say it was super clear, but I also feel as if I had a general gist once the process was over.

I would like to highlight here that Taylor served as a RA on campus. Although she was a student, her RA position legally required that she report instances of sexual violence or discrimination to the Office. Even as a campus leader and mandated reporter who received annual Title IX training, she still felt "lost" during the reporting process. It is reasonable to assume that students who do not serve in leadership positions would feel lost, if not more lost, than Taylor did. She continues,

> [The Title IX process] is long, it's lengthy. It can be very intimidating. **Just having to constantly reshare your experience. That is harmful and hurtful to have to be like reliving that (emphasis added).** And, but I wanna say they [the Office members] have good intentions. And obviously in my experience, it was solved, quote unquote. But for other people, I know that it hasn't been fully solved. And that's an issue.

Taylor's statement exemplifies the lack of survivor-centricity of Title IX legislation. If supporting victim-survivors was a main goal of Title IX, the continuous "reliving" their abuse would be mitigated. Instead, Title IX and criminal proceedings serve as retraumatization.

On the other hand, I, along with many other students, have been *indirectly* affected by sexual violence. In several unfortunate situations, I have been forced to decide whether to wear my "RPE hat," providing resources, information, contact information, or my "friend hat," providing a shoulder on which to cry. Because of this, I have done my own emotion work in coping with the knowledge of my friends' traumas and navigating interactions with alleged perpetrators. From a personal memo on February 20, 2024, I wrote,

> I saw him on campus yesterday for the first time … I feel scared. I don't feel safe around someone who has committed such acts of violence to multiple people. I feel scared for my friends who have seen him at parties over the weekend, who have gathered the courage to ask him to leave. I feel scared for others who may not know the stories and the allegations against him and might get close to him and hurt as a result. It is hard to feel safe at a place that welcomes people like this back on campus. I also feel guilty for feeling scared or feeling anything at all because I can only imagine how the women who he assaulted feel. I feel mad that my friend has to deal with seeing him for her last semester, I feel mad that she wasn't warned, I feel mad that no one … seems to care about her.

Here, my words reflect the challenges of attending a small college. If I attended a larger school, I perhaps would never cross paths with this individual again. However, when friend groups and class schedules intersect, I am forced to stifle my emotions to act in a

respectable, socially appropriate manner. I am forced to grapple with the fact that my efforts as an RPE and SGA Director of Sexual Respect and Awareness only go so far in the grand scheme of College happenings and victim-survivors' pain.

Chapter V: Discussion

My research sought to answer the question, "What does Title IX mean at the College of the Holy Cross" through a mixed-methods approach of individual and group interviews, archival analysis, and auto-ethnography with students, faculty members and staff in that office. Findings emerged into two main themes: Title IX on the national level and Title IX on the institutional level. Various difficulties posed by Title IX as federal legislation were discussed by faculty members and T9&EO administrators: mandated reporting (unique to faculty members), neutrality, and lack of survivor-centricity. These obstacles would likely be encountered at any institution of higher education across the country. Although there exists room for improvement in the written legislation, I would like to focus on the small advances that can be made by each of us on our campus today.

As for Title IX on the institutional level, community members unsurprisingly maintain their own understandings of Title IX by subgroup. For students, Title IX means support. For faculty members, Title IX means compliance and bureaucracy. For T9&EO administrators and staff members, Title IX means due process and justice within the constraints of the law. This finding also indicates the existence of a knowledge gap, as students do not entirely comprehend the purpose of the Office or Title IX itself. The knowledge gap generates mistrust and even misdirected frustration towards the Office. Heightened efforts to educate community members, especially students, on Title IX legislation and the role of the Office is necessary. Additionally, students *want* and *need* support from the College when it comes to sexual violence.

Another sub-section of this theme is emotion work. All three participant groups, students, faculty members, and T9&EO administrators, do emotion work in some

capacity. Students navigate through victim-survivor status and advocacy. Faculty members emotionally support students who are victim-survivors. T9&EO administrators work to remain neutral in cases and treat everyone with dignity and respect. It is evident that some community members, especially women, disproportionately partake in emotion work to compromise for the lack of institutional support regarding sexual violence.

The last sub-section of the Title IX on an institutional level theme involves the harmful "Holy Cross culture." Such troublesome characteristics include a culture of silence around sex, the tendency to "sideline women," a small size, and the siloed prevention efforts of the Office of Title IX and Equal Opportunity. Stemming largely from the College's Catholic identity, students and faculty members noted a culture of silence around sex that thus renders conversations about sexual violence particularly complicated. Students and faculty members also identified long-held patriarchal values and tendencies at the College that frequently exclude women. Further, the College's small size and importance place on tight-knit relationships makes being connected in any way to an instance of sexual violence particularly challenging. Finally, the Office of Title IX and Equal Opportunity's prevention efforts have remained isolated and have not yet reached the whole community

So, how can disparate understandings and experiences of Title IX and the Office of T9&EO be reconciled? How can the "Holy Cross Culture" improve to better support community members dealing with the implications of sexual violence? Where do we go from here? With the assistance of my advisors and my participants, I have several suggestions based on the knowledge obtained from my study, including both immediate structural changes and more long-term culture changes. These involve a more equitable

distribution of "emotion work," making sexual violence prevention a collective undertaking, and working to dismantle a culture of silence.

Equitable Distribution of "Emotion Work"

First, *all* community members interviewed carry a heavy load with their "emotion work," yet women carry a disproportionate amount of it. Students manage their emotions as they navigate through victim-survivor/alleged perpetrator status and advocacy *and* as they participate in campus life alongside those who have been accused and/or are believed to have perpetrated sexual violence. Faculty members support victim-survivors while coping with distressing information and perhaps handling untenable situations related to mandated reporting. They also navigate classrooms and campus life with the knowledge of sexual assault allegations. T9&EO administrators and staff members cope with distressing information, work to treat everyone similarly, and remove their personal emotions or opinions from their roles. How can we more equitably distribute the "emotion work" being done on campus? How do we provide students and faculty with the resources and skills to navigate experiences and even allegations of sexual assault? How is this uniquely important work on a small, intimate campus like Holy Cross?

The College has increased its focus on community wellness with the dedication of Ciampi Hall as a "Wellness Living Learning Community" in 2023 and the recent adoption of the Okanagan Charter. Joining the International Community of Health Promoting Universities and Colleges Network, the College commits to the Charter's two calls to action, "to embed health into all aspects of campus culture, across the administration, operations and academic mandates" and "to lead health promotion action

and collaboration locally and globally" (Okanagan Charter, 2024). Distributing the "emotion work" that has accumulated in the current campus climate would undoubtedly promote community members' psychological health and align with the values of the Okanagan Charter. Perhaps this could be achieved through the establishment of a wellness center that provides emotional and informational support to all community members: victim-survivors, alleged perpetrators, faculty members, and students. The center could be overseen by paid staff or volunteers (e.g., former faculty members, RPEs, alumni, ombudspersons dedicated exclusively to this issue, or Worcester community members) and serve as a resource for students and faculty who may have questions about the reporting process or just need a shoulder to lean on. Given that the Assistant Director of Prevention and Education of the Office is not involved with cases or hearings, perhaps this individual could more formally integrate their advocacy with the Office of Student Wellness and Education in this space. It is worth mentioning that the College does not have a Women's Center, unlike most other colleges and universities across the country. This proposed "wellness center" would carry the same sentiment as a Women's Center but would serve individuals of all gender identities.

Sexual Violence Prevention Framed as Everyone's Responsibility

At present, the Office of Title IX and Equal Opportunity works largely independently in sexual violence prevention. Despite these efforts, meaningful prevention work requires personal commitments and accountability from *all* community members. Students, faculty members, and T9&EO administrators and staff members alike identified a disconnect between sexual violence prevention efforts and community

engagement. Because only a certain number of instances meet the criteria for a Title IX complaint, other harmful behaviors must be dealt with and prevented elsewhere. As a small, intimate community, when one of us is hurt, we are all hurt. Drawing upon institutional betrayal theory (Freyd, 2008), how can we unite the community in understanding sexual violence prevention as everyone's responsibility? How can we ensure that no community member experiences institutional betrayal or work to restore their sense of trust and belonging if it does occur? Perhaps opportunity- or role-specific sexual violence prevention training could be implemented across campus. For instance, students studying abroad would benefit from learning about the culture of sexual violence in their respective countries and knowing which resources are available to them (e.g., international, national, or College-specific resources) prior to their departure. In the same vein, students leading Spring Break Immersion Program trips should receive Bringing in the Bystander™ (BitB™) training to learn how to effectively identify and mitigate harmful situations that may arise among students. As for athletes, the Office should house their sexual violence training and attendance records to ensure compliance, honesty, and transparency. It is important to tailor specific aspects of the training to the respective positions. For instance, athletes should receive information about healthy relationships with coaches and athletic trainers.

Furthermore, perhaps particular departments or programs are well-positioned to teach courses in this area, like Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies, History, Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology, and Health Studies. These courses would hopefully open students' eyes to both the prevalence and complexness of sexual violence and encourage them to become involved in prevention work, like the Introduction to

Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies course did for me. Along these lines, the addition of a "Sexual Violence Expectations and Resources" section of syllabi should be recommended to all College professors. This component situates the faculty member in alignment with sexual violence prevention and establishes that treating others with respect is expected from not just the Office of T9&EO, but from the professor, as well. It also may be worthwhile for the Office to directly reach out to professors and engage them in this work.

In doing my research, I also noticed that many campuses have explicit statements against sexual violence publicly available on their websites. While this may seem like a small piece of the puzzle, being among the campuses who "name" the sexual violence issue is a laudable goal.

Dismantling the Culture of Silence

Improvements to the "Holy Cross culture" begins with dismantling the culture of silence around sex. First, the Office and its members could increase their visibility on campus. To mitigate the effects of the "secret staircase," perhaps relocating the Office to a new space is worth considering. Nonetheless, I recognize that individuals would likely value privacy in matters of sexual violence and discrimination. Perhaps a relocation of the Office of the Assistant Director of Prevention and Education, who largely serves as the Office's liaison to campus life, is the most sound decision. This would aid in generating more visible advocacy. Sexual violence happens on every campus, so how can the College put its pride aside and stand up for victim-survivors and those who are particularly vulnerable? Recently, the Office decided to move the College's observance

of Denim Day to the last Wednesday of April, despite the Academic Conference taking place on the same day. This choice signals that victim-survivors, along with sexual violence awareness has a space on this campus, no matter the larger plans.

Additionally, given that incoming first-year students bring with them varying degrees of understanding about sex, the Office and College may consider implementing comprehensive sex education as part of Gateways Orientation or BitB™. This could be as simple as adding several slides to the existing BitB™ presentation explaining the basic purpose and functions of sex.

Future Research

Future studies could investigate the same question, "What does Title IX mean at the College of the Holy Cross?" in the coming years. By comparing future results to these, researchers could assess the progress of both the Office of T9&EO and the College's culture. Moreover, this question could be asked at other institutions of higher education. Perhaps Title IX means something entirely different at Boston College, Loyola University, or Amherst College. It would be interesting to compare the College's sexual violence prevention efforts with those of institutions similar in size, religious affiliation, and academic course. Due to time and financial constraints, I could not interview the entire community. Perhaps the College's Office of Assessment and Research could implement a widespread measure to give all community members space to share their stories. College students' experiences of sexual violence remains ever-prevalent and complex, especially given the underreporting rate. This thesis merely

scratches the surface of the issue. More resources need to be dedicated to examining the psycho-social causes and consequences of sexual violence.

Conclusion

Overall, my thesis determined that mandated reporting, neutrality, and lack of survivor-centricity are all hurdles of Title IX federal legislation. At the institutional level, community members all expressed different understandings of the function of the Office of T9&EO at the College. These inconsistencies result in mistrust and even misdirected frustrations towards the Office's mission and its administrators. Furthermore, community members, especially women, do a disproportionate amount of emotion work to provide those directly or indirectly involved in sexual violence with support. Lastly, there exists a harmful, traditional culture that renders certain individuals particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and places the responsibility of prevention solely upon the Office of T9&EO. As my time on this campus dwindles to an end, I leave behind this thesis to aid in the improvement of the College's sexual violence prevention and education. Above all, I leave behind this thesis to remind victim-survivors: I may not know you. I may not know your story. But I see you. I hear you. I believe you. And I will *always* fight for you.

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Appendix A.

Students, Alumni, Staff & Faculty Interview Questions:

1. In your own words, what is your understanding of the Office of Title IX & Equal Opportunity (T9&EO)'s role on our campus?
2. How familiar are you with the Holy Cross Office of T9&EO and its staff members?
3. How familiar are you with the legalities of T9 and the reporting process?
4. Please explain your confidence in the Office of T9&EO. Would you utilize the Office of T9&EO as a resource? Why or why not?
    a. Have you utilized the Office of T9&EO as a resource in the past? If yes, please describe your experience. Would you use the Office again? Why or why not?
5. How do you think the Office of T9&EO could improve its presence on campus?
6. In your opinion, which aspects of the T9 process are most helpful? Least helpful?
7. What, if any, changes have you noticed in the Office of T9&EO during your time at the College?
8. Faculty: How do you feel about mandated reporting responsibilities? What is your sense of how the faculty feel in general about mandatory reporting?

Office of T9&EO Questions:

1. How did you get into the Title IX field? What was the path you took? (training, reasons interested, etc.)
2. In your own words, what is your understanding of the Office of Title IX & Equal Opportunity (T9&EO)'s role on our campus?
3. What does a day in the life of an Office of T9&EO member look like?
4. What are some challenges that you face as an Office of T9&EO member?
5. What do you enjoy most about your role?
6. How do you think T9 as legislation could improve? What are its strengths and what are its weaknesses?
7. If the College allocated a million dollars to your office, what would you do with it, and why?