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## Measuring Current Knowledge of Students at a Faith-Based University about Title IX and Sexual Assault

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## ABSTRACT

Sexual assault is a worldwide issue that has affected colleges and universities for years. Regardless of the barriers, given the seriousness of sexual misconduct and the prevalence of sexual misconduct on college campuses, more should be done to address the issue. The purpose of this study is to investigate the current knowledge of sexual misconduct and Title IX among the community members of a faith-based university. The results of this study could make significant contributions to practice and policy by providing useful information for Title IX offices and designated coordinators. This study was analyzed as a descriptive study, and used a cross-sectional survey to investigate the current knowledge of sexual misconduct and Title IX among the students. The data provided evidence that the students who participated in the study were mostly knowledgeable about Title IX; however, there were still some areas that they did not understand. The results also show that the students want and need more activities on campus to participate in. The results from this study should encourage faith-based universities to start talking about sexual assault and Title IX on their campuses more often.

Measuring Current Knowledge of Students at a Faith-Based University about Title IX  
and Sexual Assault

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of The School of Social Work  
Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science in Social Work

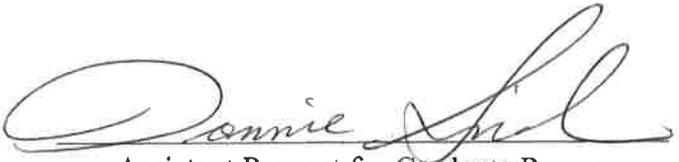
By

Hannah Louise Harrell

May 2019

This thesis, directed and approved by the committee for the thesis candidate Hannah Scout Harrell, has been accepted by the Office of Graduate Programs of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Science in Social Work



Assistant Provost for Graduate Programs

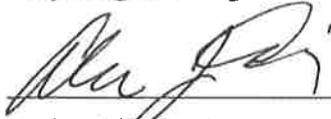
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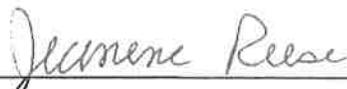
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Problem Statement**

Sexual misconduct is a nation-wide concern. A recent study conducted by the Association of American Universities (Edwards, Sessarego, & Schmidt, 2018) found that out of 150,072 college students from 27 different institutions, about 23% of undergraduate women had experienced sexual assault during college. Over the years, the nation has become more aware of how prevalent sexual misconduct is on college campuses. Nationally, 25% of women and 15% of men will be assaulted on their college campus at some point during their college career (Get Statistics, 2018). In order to address this problem, policies, such as the Clery Act (1990), have been created to hold universities responsible to address the prevalence of sexual assault on their campuses. Also, through campus policy changes, intervention programs, and nation-wide movements, universities are becoming more aware of the prevalence of sexual assault and are pushing for change on their campuses. However, regardless of the need for a change and an awareness of the problem, there is little to no research about the importance of educating students and faculty about sexual assault and how to prevent it (Edwards et al., 2018).

#### **Previous Knowledge**

A literature review conducted in the present study suggests that sexual assault is a nationwide concern. Regardless of the barriers, given the seriousness of sexual misconduct and the prevalence of sexual misconduct on college campuses, more should be done

to address the issue. Over the years universities have slowly started to implement programs, trainings, and activities to promote prevention on their campuses. In the last several years, there have been many policy enhancements regarding sexual misconduct on college campuses. However, there is little to no research about colleges' compliance with the Title IX office, only on the prevalence of assaults on campuses (Edwards et al., 2018).

### **Present Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate current knowledge of sexual misconduct and Title IX among the community members of a faith-based university. The results of this study could make significant contributions to practice and policy by providing useful information for Title IX offices and designated coordinators. The knowledge the prevalence of sexual misconduct offers an open door for change, because the cost of school should not include sexual violence.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter describes a review of existing literature about sexual misconduct on college campuses. It looked at literature that provides feedback on successful interventions and how faith-based universities respond to sexual misconduct on their campuses. By using the database EBSCO on the Brown Library website, sources were found through key words such as: “sexual misconduct,” “sexual misconduct AND college campuses,” “sexual assault AND college,” “Title IX,” “Dear Colleague Letter,” and “college AND Title IX”.

#### **Sexual Misconduct on College Campuses**

As defined in the university anti-harassment policy handbook, sexual misconduct is “a broad, non-legal term encompassing a range of non-consensual sexual activity or unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature.” Sexual misconduct includes, but is not limited to, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, stalking, and relationship violence. Sexual assault can be committed by a man or a woman, and can occur between people of the same or opposite sex (Henrick, 2013). Sexual assault is very prominent in America. Each year, about 321,500 people (age 12 or older) become victims of sexual assault or rape. That is about one person assaulted every 98 seconds (Rape, Abuse, Incest, National, Network, 2018). According to a study conducted by the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN), victims of sexual assault are typically between the ages 12

and 34. RAINN also found that one in every six women and one in every ten males are victims of attempted or completed sexual assault.

Sexual misconduct is an ongoing problem on college campuses. Through an observation of six studies that were conducted to measure the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses, researcher Lauren Germain (2016) found that sexual misconduct on college campuses was, and still is, widespread. Sexual assault can happen to anyone; however, women are the most affected by sexual misconduct. One in every five women become victims of attempted or completed sexual assault. In 1957, two sociologists, Clifford Kirkpatrick and Eugene Kanin published an article about male aggression on university campuses. They surveyed 291 women on a campus and found over a thousand “offensive episodes” including attempted intercourse and successful intercourse. Their groundbreaking study was also the kick start for other researchers to begin measuring the prevalence of sexual misconduct on college campuses. In 1985, Mary P. Koss and colleagues surveyed 3,862 students in the Midwest (Koss & Gidycz, 1985). Their study found that 13% of female students experienced some type of sexual misconduct and about 4.6% of male students admitted to being perpetrators of sexual misconduct, including acts of rape. In 1987, Koss published another study that observed over 6,000 college students from 32 colleges in the U.S. (Koss, Gidycz, Wisniewski, 1987). The study found that about 27.5% of college aged women experienced rape or attempted rape. The study proved that the rates of prevalence on campuses did not vary from big or small, and that they were consistent among institutions in urban areas, medium-sized cities, and rural areas. A 2000 study conducted by the National Institute of Justice found that nearly 5% of college women are victimized within any given calendar year (Fisher, Cullen & Turner,

2000). A study conducted between 2005 and 2007 found that, out of 6,800 undergraduate students from two large public universities, 19% of the female participants have experienced attempted or successful sexual misconduct since the beginning of their college careers (Germain, 2016). What all of these studies and findings have in common is the prevalence of sexual misconduct committed against women on college campuses and how little the data have changed over the years. Even though there has been little to no change in the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses, understanding factors that can contribute to the risk of sexual misconduct can help universities create an intervention that prevents it from happening, and hopefully, start to decrease the prevalence.

There are many factors that can contribute to the high rates of sexual misconduct among students. Studies have also shown that “students are at the highest risk in the first few months on their first or second semester in college” (Office of Women’s Health, 2018). In a study about the risks of unwanted sex in college, a pattern of high rates of sexual assault happening within the first couple semesters of college was discovered (Kimble, Neacsiu, Flack, & Horner, 2008). They decided to call this pattern “the Red Zone” (Kimble et al., 2008). Kimble et al. found that students who were within their first couple semesters of college served as "prey" for the upper-class students. Students who were in higher levels, such as senior year, were more likely to invite under-class students and newer students to parties that involved alcohol and drugs. The results of the study provided evidence that these parties increased the risk of unwanted sexual activities (Kimble et al., 2008). In addition to the discovery of the "Red Zone", researchers have also found that common factors, such as drugs and alcohol, increase the risk of sexual as-

sault. About 15% of young women are raped within their first year of college due to incapacitation (Office of Women's Health, 2018). Other factors like peer pressure can also contribute to causing a higher risk for sexual misconduct within the first year of college. Because it is a young man or woman's first time being on their own and away from their parents, many students fall subject to peer pressure. Peer pressure can be related to sexual activities themselves, or to other things that can lead to sexual misconduct, such as alcohol, drugs, or going to parties (Office of Women's Health, 2018). Due to the involvement of drugs and alcohol, barriers are created that prevent students from reporting.

### **Effects of Sexual Misconduct**

Sexual misconduct can have many long-lasting effects on survivors and victims. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and suicidal thoughts are two of the most common effects sexual misconduct can have on a survivor. In the United States, about 94% of women who are sexually assaulted experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder within the first two weeks after the assault. Within the first nine months, 30% of women experience PTSD. About 33% of women contemplate suicide, and 13% of women attempt suicide; however, records do not indicate whether or not they were successful. A study done by RAINN, in 2018, showed that victims of sexual misconduct experience moderate to severe distress at a much larger percentage compared to victims of a violent crime (RAINN). Survivors of sexual misconduct are also at a high risk for substance abuse problems. Drug and alcohol abuse is particularly common among females who experienced trauma through sexual misconduct. Theories, such as the self-medication theory, can help researchers explain why so many females experience substance abuse after

a traumatic sexual assault. Survivors use drugs or alcohol to reduce any “re-experiencing or intrusive PTSD symptoms” (Ullman, Relyea, Peter-Hagene, & Vasquez, 2013).

### **The History of Title IX**

Title IX was created in 1972 as a response to address sexual misconduct in college settings and prevent negative consequences that follow assault. Within the system of American higher education, campus sexual misconduct is a frequent and recurring problem. In the last few years, the United States has become more concerned about sexual assault on college campuses. Due to the increase in national attention, issues within universities regarding Title IX cases have come to light.

“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” (United States Department of Education, 2018) This is the mission statement that the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights enforces through Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972. The Education Amendment of 1972 applies to all institutions that receive federal financial assistance, which includes state and local education agencies as well. In order to make sure that the institutions are complying with the law, the Office of Civil Rights provides information and guidelines to make sure that institutions understand their obligations under Title IX (United States Department of Education, 2018).

Originally, in 1972, the Title IX amendment was put into place to create equality among athletic programs. After Title IX was put into place, the number of women participating in varsity high school athletics increased over the years from less than 300,000 to

more than 3 million (Kennedy, 2010). Over all, female athletics has grown by 904% in high schools and 456% in colleges since the implementation of the act (Kennedy, 2010).

As the years went on, more and more issues within the education system came to light. In the case *Brzonkala v. Virginia Polytechnic and State University*, Brzonkala stated, “The school’s response to the complaint of sexual assault was so flawed, that it created a hostile environment, deprived of equal access to education” (Tani, 2017, p. 1849). This is just one case that sparked a need for better policies within Title IX, in order to create a safe environment. In 1994, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was enacted to deal with alleged rape on college campuses. The VAWA allowed for colleges to take “action for victims of gender-motivated crimes of violence” (Tani, 2017, p. 1850). Once this act was in place, the U.S. Department of Justice began studying the statistics of sexual violence on college campuses. The DOJ found in a 2007 study that “One in every five undergraduate women —20%— will have experienced attempted or completed sexual assault between the moment [she] steps on campus to the end of her college career” (Tani, 2017, p. 1850). This “one-in-five” statistic was so troubling for the Department of Education that, on April 4th, 2011 the “Dear Colleague Letter” was enacted to help institutions hold themselves accountable when responsive to sexual violence complaints, and reminded institutions that failure to respond could potentially create a hostile environment resulting in a loss of federal funds (Tani, 2017). Other policies like the Clery Act were also implemented on college campuses to keep their administration in check. The Clery Act, now known as the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, requires colleges and universities to “acquire and publish campus crime statistics for the preceding three years under calendar year formation”

(Lee, 2017, p. 59). Each of these policies is important to creating a safe environment free from inequity and violence. Although these policies have not created a perfect college campus, they have created guidelines that provides schools with the correct tools to be able to accommodate survivors and victims, such as separate classes, alternate housing, no contact orders, and free counseling services.

### **Implementation of Title IX on College Campuses**

In addition to policy changes, many schools have heard the nation's cry for a change and have taken it upon themselves to step up and take action. Before the "Dear Colleague" letter was released in 2011, Loyola Marymount University saw a need for an ongoing prevention education program. The LMU Campus Awareness Resource Education Services (LMU CARES) was created and provided programs that educated students on healthy relationships, including boundaries, your value within the relationship, and navigation (Maturi, 2017). Following the successful program, Briana Maturi launched a campaign called, "Live the Lion's Code". This Campaign focused on education about the prevention of sexual misconduct. Throughout the campaign, the students on the LMU campus participated in a 90-minute interactive workshop that encompassed the climate of sexual and interpersonal misconduct, the definition of consent and how to ask for it, the importance of the bystander intervention, as well as provided support, services, and resources for students who experienced any kind of misconduct. Additionally, LMU CARES also worked with students on how to implement the bystander intervention. The workshop, "Step Up and Step In" addressed situations that required bystander action, empowered participants to step in and take action, and allowed for students to not just read

about the bystander intervention, but also put the intervention into action in a safe and controlled environment.

In 2016, Baylor University, which is one of the world's largest Baptist colleges (Mervosh, 2016), found itself under scrutiny after several football players were accused of sexual assault. This accusation highlighted a "systemic and campus-wide problem" that started an investigation of all sexual assault cases between 2011 and 2015. Although it was documented that only about 19 football players were accused of sexual assault, the lawsuit, conducted in January of that next year, exposed that more than "31 football players committed at least 52 acts of rape, including five gang rapes" (Mervosh, 2016). The university was not only accused of victim-blaming, but also of mishandling accusations. These accusations were outlined in several lawsuits. This incident was named "one of the worst college rape scandals in history" (Mervosh, 2016).

The following year, in 2017, the national movement #MeToo was launched. As a result of the sexual assault scandal, along with the revolution of the #MeToo Movement, campus awareness was heightened. Baylor saw these events as an opportunity to take preventative action. In 2018, Baylor celebrated National Sexual Assault Awareness Month (April) through an exhibition called "What Were You Wearing?" Here, students were able to walk around campus and look at displays of re-creations of outfits survivors and victims were wearing when they were assaulted. Displays included, but were not limited to, a child's sundress, a man's gym clothes, and a woman's swimsuit.

The exhibit educated students that perpetrators of sexual misconduct were not always just the "scary guy in the dark alley." The display showed that a coworker at CVS,

a classmate, a friend at a barbecue, or a family member in their own home can all be capable of sexual misconduct (Hardy, 2018). Paige Hardy, who spearheaded the activity, stated that they decided to nail the clothes to doors in order to represent the student's desire for "open doors to new conversations" (Hardy, 2018). This door exhibit was so successful on the Baylor campus that it caught the attention of other colleges, including McLennan Community College, and other local organizations, each wanting to display the "What Were You Wearing?" exhibit to educate people about sexual misconduct.

Aside from the exhibits used as education tools, other universities are creating programs that are more interactive for students. Through peer advocacy training, one university student created a program that encouraged empowerment across her college campus (Krause, Miedema, Woofter, & Yount, 2017). After being sexually assaulted herself, and feeling like her friends were unsupportive or uneducated about sexual misconduct and resources to help her, Krause created a program that allowed other students in her position to receive that help. She worked with an advocate in the sexual and dating violence program and created a peer advocacy training that taught students about sexual misconduct and about the resources that the campus offered for survivors. Within the training, students from all programs including Greek life, athletics, academic departments, etc., are given five sections that discuss sexual misconduct (Krause et al., 2017). The first section is a short skit that defines victim blaming, its prevalence on college campuses, and how it harms survivors. After the skit, facilitators provide the participants with definitions and statistics about sexual misconduct. Through a quiz, participants are then asked to distinguish between facts and myths about sexual misconduct. Evidence has shown that it is rare that all the students are able to correctly discern the difference between fact and

myth (Krause et al., 2017). Following the quiz, participants are given an overview of the university's anti-harassment policies, including definitions of consent and particular sexual acts that are related to the purview of the university's policies. Once this section is completed, participants are given a five-step guideline that informs participants how to respond to a peer who discloses sexual assault: (1) ensure immediate safety of the survivor, (2) present available resources to the survivor, (3) continually focus on empowerment of the survivor, (4) allow the survivor to be self-sufficient, and (5) support the survivor without blame or judgment. Finally, facilitators review campus resources and services again, ensuring that all participants are well informed of on-campus and off-campus resources (Krause et al., 2017).

Another university utilized an organization called Green Dot to implement the bystander intervention on their campus (Coker et al., 2011). The bystander intervention is when someone who is not directly involved in a situation recognizes a potentially harmful situation and responds in a way that influences the outcome (Lehigh University, 2017). Through a cross-sectional survey of a random sample of 7,945 college undergraduates, data showed that students who received the Green Dot training have significantly lower rape myth acceptance scores than students who did not receive training (Coker et al., 2011).

Each of these education tools aims to empower students through education. The program's goals are to avoid "othering," or "victim blaming," diminish gender norms, reduce masculinities that foster male violence, and empower students (Krause et al., 2017). Administrators at universities want to make sure that they are implementing programs

that students can relate to, but at the same time, educate them about the reality of sexual misconduct on their campuses.

### **Barriers to Title IX Implementation on College Campuses**

In spite of various efforts, the problem of sexual misconduct still exists. There are several barriers that prevent the programs from being 100% effective.

#### **Factors Contributing to Low Report Rate**

There are several factors that contribute to low reporting rates of sexual assault. One major factor is the fact that sometimes the perpetrator is someone the victim is close to. Because a large majority of assaults are committed by acquaintances of the victim, victims are reluctant to report (Karjane, Fisher, & Cullen, 2005).

Other factors that contribute to low reporting rates are school policies and other university related issues. Due to fear of reprisal and many other reservations, sexual misconduct is severely underreported. Reasons like drug and alcohol use, jeopardizing his or her relationship, and the fear of the system are all factors that contribute to the low reporting rates (Pappas, 2016).

Another problem universities face that affects reporting rates is the perception of organizational tolerance to sexual harassment. A university's tolerance of sexual misconduct can create a sense of rape culture across campus. Rape culture is the "normalization" of sexual misconduct, where the blame gets shifted from the perpetrator to the victim (Spencer, Mallory, Toews, Stith, & Wood, 2017). Victim blaming is another barrier that influences survivors not to report. There are many myths and untruthful things that create barriers and make the reality of sexual misconduct vastly ignored. Myths like "Rape only happens to women," "it is only rape when the perpetrator has a weapon," or "'nice' girls

don't get raped” have all provided a link between victim blaming, restricted attitudes about rape, and sexist attitudes against women (Germain, 2016).

In 2009, the journal *Sex Roles* examined rape among 109 college women (Jonason, 2009). Out of the study came three different categories of rape: (1) violent stranger rape, (2) drug-or alcohol-facilitated rape, and (3) date rape. These categories create rape scripts that place the responsibility on the victims and allows for people to subscribe to rape-supportive attitudes. Studies have also shown that men have a higher rape acceptance level than women (Worthen & Wallace, 2017). These rape-supportive attitudes lead to underreporting rates and a high prevalence of sexual misconduct on college campuses.

In a study looking at reasons why women did not report their assault in college (Spencer et al., 2017), 220 survivors were interviewed and questioned. Out of the 220 females, 42 students stated that they did not know they could report or did not know how, 64 students convinced themselves that it wasn't a big enough deal, 31 students stated that it did not involve the university because it happened outside of campus, 23 students stated that they were too afraid, 20 stated that it was because they were drunk, and 11 believed that it was their fault. The students who believed it was their fault stated that they "would get blamed for putting themselves in that position." Even though the reason "it wasn't a big enough deal to report" was the most common answer in the study, it was alarming to the researchers that the second most common reason so many students did not report was because they "did not know how to report" or "did not know reporting was even an option." One survivor stated that she knew she could report, but she "did not know the procedures for reporting." Spencer and colleagues (2017) stated in the results

that these findings create some important implications for college administrators and Title IX coordinators, meaning they must find a way to effectively alert and educate their students about their options.

### **Lack of Faculty Knowledge**

In an article written on feminist theories in regard to sexual assault on campus, researcher Bordere (2017) explains that not many institutions have policies in place for bereavement related to sexual assault. She states that a lot of faculty members also do not have the knowledge and understanding of sexual assault in order to adequately respond (Bordere, 2017). Bordere, along with several other colleagues, recommends several different interventions for universities. These include: a change in policies, training for faculty on the language to use when speaking with students, and including information about sexual misconduct in their syllabi.

### **Conclusion of Literature Review**

Sexual assault is a nationwide concern. Because of the lack of research on the importance of educating students and faculty about sexual misconduct, it is important that the university acknowledges the prevalence of sexual misconduct on their campuses and respond to it. Regardless of the barriers, given the seriousness of sexual misconduct and the prevalence of sexual misconduct on college campuses, more should be done to address the issue. Over the years, universities have slowly started to implement programs, trainings, and activities to promote prevention on their campuses. Understanding that sexual misconduct is very common on college campuses is vital. The knowledge of the prevalence of sexual misconduct offers an open door for change and continues the push for a

decrease in the prevalence, because the cost of school should not include sexual violence (“Know Your IX”).

CHAPTER III  
METHODOLOGY

**Research Design**

This descriptive study used a cross-sectional survey study to investigate current knowledge of sexual misconduct and Title IX among the students of a faith-based university. The demographics of the students were collected, with no identifying factors, and included quantitative results about the current knowledge a student has about sexual assault and Title IX.

**Participants**

Students at a faith-based university were chosen to be participants in the study. The email addresses were accessed through the database on the students' personal Gmail. Students automatically have access to all current students' email addresses through a database on Gmail. This allowed for the researcher to send out emails to any current student at the university. Over 40 students were sent the survey and asked to fill it out.

According to the demographics of this university, many of the students surveyed were undergraduate students between the ages of 18 and 24. The ethnic make-up of these students at university were 63.9% white, 16.4% Hispanic/Latino, and 9% African American/Black. The gender make-up of students at this university were about 41.5% male and 58.5% female.

## **Data Collection Procedure**

In order to collect data about the current knowledge of sexual misconduct and Title IX among the community members of this university, the survey was sent out via email to a select few, random students at a faith-based university. The survey, which was approved by the University International Review Board prior to the emails being sent out, was anonymous and asked questions like age, ethnic background, professional level (student/faculty), what they knew about Title IX, what they knew about sexual misconduct, as well as other questions regarding the Title IX office such as location of office, how to access the policy handbook online, and satisfaction with the availability of resources.

There was an explanation of confidentiality before the survey questions are revealed, and a notice was posted at the end of each page throughout the survey explaining that the survey covered difficult topics and offered a list of resources, on- and off-campus, for those who need to reach out for help. After careful review, it was concluded that the survey and review of literature did not pose any potential danger or harm to the participants.

Although there are no potential threats to the participants, getting full participation from all students was difficult. Without incentives, not many students take the time to complete surveys longer than 5-10 questions. Another problem encountered was the subjective answers given by the participants. The survey was qualitative and quantitative. The survey started out as qualitative because students and faculty members were able to answer some of the questions using their own language; other questions were based on a scale.

## **Instruments**

The present study used a survey that was developed by the researcher using an existing survey that was created by Williams College and the Elizabeth Freeman Center (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). The survey asked a series of questions about sexual assault, and participants answered based on several different scales such as "agree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree". Questions like, "how often have you heard the phrases: that test raped me, make jokes about sexual assault, or describe others in an explicit graphic or degrading way?", "If someone was to report a sexual assault that happened would this university take it seriously, would this university take steps to protect the safety of the person making the report, will this university provide support for the person making a report", etc. were asked. Socio-demographic information was collected including gender, classification, and race. This information did not disclose any personal information about the participants and kept their answers confidential to the researcher, as well as those reviewing the results.

## **Data Analysis**

The survey was distributed online via email. Once participants are able to access the survey, they were informed of the purpose of the study, signed electronically for consent, and continued on to answer the questions. The informed consent form explained to the participants the nature of the study, informed them of the confidentiality of their responses, notified them of the risk, and provided them contact information for the investigator, as well as other resources relating to the subject matter. The survey did not include identifiable information. The data was stored on a password-protected computer, in a password protected file that only the PI and the thesis chair could access. Demographic

questions were examined to see patterns of answers among males, females, and based off of their age (or classification at the University). Descriptive statistics were examined to measure the current knowledge students have about Title IX and sexual assault.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

In order to measure the current knowledge of students at a faith-based university about sexual assault and Title IX, a descriptive study was conducted. Data was collected through a survey that was distributed via email to undergraduate and graduate students at Abilene Christian University. Once the data was collected, it was analyzed through either a descriptive analysis or frequency analysis.

#### **Descriptive Analysis of Data**

Table 1 shows the detailed information of the participants' demographic background. The study participants were mostly female. Out of the 22 responses, there were 21 females (95.5%) and one male (4.5%). The largest group consisted of undergraduate students completing their senior year, with a total number of 10, accounting for 45.5% of the total. The lower groups, beginning with the lowest number of participants consisted of one sophomore (4.5%), four juniors (18.2%), and seven graduate students (31.8%). There were no freshman participants. White students made up the majority of the ethnicity groups, making up 72.7% of the population. The second largest group is Hispanic (13.6%), then bi-racial (9.1%), and Black or African American (4.5%).

Table 1

*Characteristics of the Sample (N =22)*

Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	1	4.5
	Female	21	95.5
Ethnicity	Black or African American	1	4.5
	Hispanic	3	13.6
	Two or more races	2	9.1
	White	16	72.7
Classification	Sophomore	1	4.5
	Junior	4	18.2
	Senior	10	45.5
	Graduate	8	31.8

### **Descriptive Statistics of Major Variables**

#### **Knowledge About Title IX Office**

Abilene Christian University undergraduate and graduate students were asked whether or not they knew what services the Title IX office offers. Out of the 22 participants, 19 students (87%) of the participants stated that they do know what the office does. The participants were then asked if they knew where the office was located. Sixteen students stated that, "Yes," they do know where the office is located. About 31.8% of the participants stated that they do not know where the office is located.

Table 2

*Knowledge of the Nature and Location of Title IX Office (N = 22)*

Variable	Category	N	%
Know Office	No	3	13.0
	Yes	19	86.4
Know Office Location	No	7	31.8
	Yes	15	68.2

*Table 2.1 Description of What the Office Does*

---

No answer
Investigate matter of discrimination and sexual harassment/assault on campus
Inures the equity of all genders within higher education (athletics, sex, advocacy)
Handles case related to sexual harassment and assault
Addresses sexual assault cases/discrimination, etc. promotes safety and education
Prohibits sex discrimination
Helps advocate and support anyone affected by sexual assault
They're the people that you can go to, to talk about an assault
There to protect students against discrimination/harassment
Deal with any kind of sexual assault, as well as discrimination
Deals with discrimination on campus due to race, sex and lots of other factors
Handles cases of sexual assault
Equips students with knowledge about sexual consent, responds to sexual harassment/abuse on campus
Serve as a voice and helps get justice for sexual abuse victims
Work towards eliminating any kind of discrimination/assault
Protects people from hazing and forms of harassment
Handles sexual assault cases for students at ACU
Raise awareness of sexual assault issues on campus/resources for students who have been assaulted
They deal with sexual harassment issues in academic settings
The office that handles any and all cases against sexual assault or violence

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Table 2.1 shows the responses of the participants when asked to explain their interpretation of what the Title IX office does. Although 3 students did not know the answer, 19

participants explained that the Title IX office helps students who have been sexually harassed or discriminated against.

*Table 2.2 Response to the Question of Where the Office is Located*

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Next to ACU PD
In the house located next to the ACU Police station
The house around the corner from Washington street
Across the street from Hardin, in a house, next door to campus police
Across from the Administration Building
Next to campus on campus court
Next to ACU PD
It's by the ACU PD office
The little house next to the ACU police station
The little house next to the ACU police department
In a little house, next to ACU PD
By ACU PD
Across the street from campus, next to the police station in the little house
It's near ACU PD building
By ACU PD
The building next to the police station

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As shown in Table 2.2, only 16 respondents answered the question of where the Title IX office is located. The data also show that the students who did respond correctly answered that the office is located by the ACU Police Department.

Table 3

*Title IX Knowledge (N = 22)*

Variable	Disagree	Agree	Do not know
Title IX handles cases about sexual assault only	68.2	0.0	31.8
Title IX does not take cases where faculty (or staff) are being accused of assault, discrimination, or harassment	63.6	4.5	31.8
Title IX only offers resources for the person making a complaint	63.6	13.6	22.7
Title IX does not investigate cases if there is no accusation of sexual assault	54.5	9.1	36.4
If someone needed to report a sexual assault, Title IX has made it clear about where to make those reports in-person and online	18.2	36.4	45.5
Title IX only takes cases that happen at my organization and on campus	54.5	9.1	36.4
If alcohol or drugs were involved in the case, the Title IX coordinator has to report them to my organization	36.4	27.3	36.4
If someone says "yes" to sexual activities, but half way through decides they are uncomfortable and says "no", the other person deserves the right to finish the activity	86.4	0.0	13.6
If someone reports an assault to a faculty or staff member, he/she has to keep that information confidential	45.5	18.2	36.4

### **Organization Climate**

Table 4 presents the information regarding the question of “How often do you hear or see (via online posts) members of the community in my organization say [insert category]”. In order to understand the results intuitively, means and standard deviation

for each answer are presented. Skewness and kurtosis was in the normal distribution range. When the participants were asked about hearing someone say, “That test, assignment, or activity ‘raped’ them” 27.3% of the students responded “never,” “sometimes,” or “rarely.” Only 18.2% of the participants said that they hear those phrases “often”. Out of the 22 responses, 31.8% of the participants said that they hear people make jokes about sexual assault or rape “rarely” and “sometimes.” The final question of this section asked if students heard people make comments about others in sexually explicit or degrading ways, and 63.6% of the participants stated that they hear these types of comments on their campus “sometimes.” Only one participant stated that he/she has never heard anyone say something like that.

Table 4

*Students' Experiences during Their Time at the University (N = 22)*

Variable	N or M	% or SD
Say that a test, assignment, or other activity "raped" them	2.36	1.09
Never	6	27.3
Rarely	6	27.3
Sometimes	6	27.3
Often	4	18.2
Make jokes about sexual assault or rape	2.77	0.97
Never	2	9.1
Rarely	7	31.8
Sometimes	7	31.8
Often	6	27.3
Describe other in a sexually explicit, graphic, or degrading way	2.86	0.71
Never	1	4.5
Rarely	4	18.2
Sometimes	14	63.6
Often	3	13.6

*Note. Scale: 1=Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Sometimes; and 4=Often.*

Table 5 presents the information regarding the question of “If someone was to report an assault that happened to them.” The purpose of this portion of the survey was to measure the student’s knowledge on what the Title IX office does to help. According to the data presented in Table 5, most of the students agreed that the organization would do what they could to support its students. If the students did not answer that they agreed

with the statement, participants were more likely to answer “neither” than they were to answer “disagree.”

Table 5

*Organization’s Expected Response to Report (N = 22)*

Variable	Disagree	Agree	Neither
My organization would take the report seriously	9.1	63.6	27.3
My organization would take steps to protect the safety of the person making the report	18.2	59.1	22.7
My organization would support the person making the report	18.2	50.0	31.8
My organization would provide support for the person being accused of assault	22.7	45.5	31.8
My organization would take steps to prevent retaliation against anyone involved in the case	31.8	36.4	31.8
If an assault happens on campus, my organization provides support for all students, and provides resources	9.1	63.6	27.3

When the respondents were asked to answer all that apply to the question of “Based on your own experiences and what you have heard, my organization responds to reports by providing ...” the findings provided evidence that not all the participants knew every aspect of the Title IX office. All 22 participants knew that the Title IX office helps with reporting to the police; however, only eight participants also knew that Title IX helped with housing modifications. Only about 72–77% of the participants knew that the Title IX office helps with students accessing the police/court system and supportive measures.

Table 6

*The Organization Responds to the Experience (N=22)*

Variable	N	% of Total
Information about and help reporting to the police	22	100.0
Information about and help accessing the police and court system	17	77.3
Supportive measures (counseling, doctor visits, safety/protective accommodations)	16	72.7
Academic accommodations (changes to class schedules, other academic support, etc.)	12	54.5
Housing modification	8	36.4

*Note.* Responded all that apply

### **Opinion Regarding Sexual Assault**

Table 7 presents the information regarding questions about the misconceptions of sexual assault. According to the results, 100% of the participants disagreed with the statements “Sexual activity one time automatically implies consent for sexual activities again” and “Only male athletes commit sexual assault.” About 22.7% of the participants agreed with the misconception “If a guy is drunk, he might rape someone unintentionally.” For the statement, “Girls who say they were raped often times felt led on by the guy and are having regrets,” 45.5% of the participants stated that they disagreed with the statement, and 36.4% agreed with the statement. About 18.2% of the participants stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. A significant point to take away from the data in this table is that a majority of the participants disagreed with the misconceptions about sexual assault.

Table 7

*Beliefs about Assault (N = 22)*

Variable	Disagree	Agree	Neither
It is not necessary to discuss consent before sexual activity if you are in a relationship with another person	86.4	4.5	9.1
Sexual activity one time automatically implies consent for sexual activities again	100.0	0.0	0.0
If both people are drunk, it cannot be rape	77.3	4.5	18.2
If a guy is drunk, he might rape someone unintentionally	63.6	22.7	13.6
Girls who say they were raped often times felt led on by the guy and are having regrets	45.5	36.4	18.2
If someone says yes to sexual activities, but passes out before activities start, it is still ok to have sex with that person	95.5	0.0	4.5
What someone wears strongly suggests whether or not they want sex	81.8	4.5	13.6
It is ok to give someone more alcohol or drugs to loosen them up in order to make them more comfortable for sexual activates	90.9	0.0	9.1
If someone participates in sexual activities with one person, that implies consent for others to have sex with him/her	100.0	0.0	0.0
Only male athletes commit sexual assault	100.0	0.0	0.0

Table 8 presents the information regarding the question of “Which of the following have you done or would you do in your time” at the organization. Students were asked if they, at some point during their college career, would express their discomfort

when someone makes a joke about rape or when someone makes a comment that minimizes sexual assault. Out of the 22 respondents, 54.5% stated that they had already done this. Similarly, 54.5% of the students stated that they have already interrupted conversations when it seemed like someone was making the other person uncomfortable. The survey asked the students if they have ever helped a friend get home because they were intoxicated. Of the 22 respondents, 72.7% of the students have done this at some point during college. One participant stated that they would not make an official report to the Title IX office on his/her campus; however, 86.4% of the participants said that they would make an official report.

Table 8

*Respondents' Own Behaviors (N = 22)*

Variable	Done	Would not	Never but would
Watched my friends' unattended drinks at parties	40.9	4.5	54.5
Checked on a friend who appeared very intoxicated when they were leaving the party with someone	36.4	0.0	63.6
Expressed my discomfort when someone made a joke about rape or a comment that minimized sexual assault	54.5	4.5	40.9
Helped a friend home who was intoxicated	72.7	0.0	27.3
Interrupted a conversation when it looked like one person might be making the other person feel uncomfortable or unsafe	54.5	0.0	45.5
Talked to a friend who I suspected might be in an abusive or harmful relationship	59.1	0.0	40.9
Called Campus Security or Police to intervene in a situation that looked dangerous	18.2	0.0	81.8
Spoke up to a friend who admitted to having sex with someone who was intoxicated or didn't consent	13.6	4.5	81.8
Made an official report to the campus's Title IX office	9.1	4.5	86.4

*Note.* Actual options were: I have done this; I would not do this; and I have not had the opportunity to do this, but I would

### **Related Experience**

Table 9 presents the information regarding the question “Have any of the following incidents happened to you, during your time?”. The first three statements had similar responses. For the statements “been stalked or followed,” “received unwanted messages,”

and "been in a controlling and abusive relationship," 36.4% of the participants responded "no". Several trends emerged from the data about events that have happened during their time at the University. Of the 22 respondents, 27.3% of the respondents said that "Someone tried to touch, kiss, or rub against the private areas of his/her/my body, or tried to remove some of his/her/my clothes, even though you didn't want them to" more than once. 22.7% also said that "Someone DID touch, kiss, or rub against the private areas of his/her/my body, or removed some of his/her/my clothes, even though you didn't want them to" more than once.

Table 9

*Respondents' Own Experiences (N = 22)*

Variable	No	Once	More than Once	Unsure
Been stalked or followed	36.4	27.3	9.1	9.1
Received unwanted messages, texts, emails, etc. from someone who makes you uncomfortable	36.4	18.2	31.8	13.6
Been in a relationship that was controlling or abusive (physically, mentally, emotionally, sexually, financially)	36.4	22.7	13.6	27.3
Been sexually harassed by a student	45.5	13.6	9.1	31.8
Been sexually harassed by a faculty/staff member	95.5		4.5	0.0
Been discriminated against by a student due to my race or gender	40.9	13.6	13.6	31.8
Been discriminated against by a faculty/staff member due to my race or gender	59.1	9.1	4.5	27.3
Someone TRIED to touch, kiss, or rub against the private areas of his/her/my body, or tried to remove some of his/her/my clothes, even though you didn't want them to	54.5	4.5	27.3	13.6
Someone DID touch, kiss, or rub against the private areas of his/her/my body, or removed some of his/her/my clothes, even though you didn't want them to	63.6	4.5	22.7	9.1
Someone TRIED to penetrate him/her/me, or make him/her/me penetrate them, even though he/she/I did not want to	77.3	9.1	4.5	9.1
Someone DID penetrate him/her/me, or made him/her penetrate them, even though they did not want to	72.7	9.1	4.5	13.6
Someone TRIED to perform oral sex on him/her/me, or give them oral sex even though they did not want to	72.7	9.1	9.1	9.1
Someone DID perform oral sex on him/her/me, or made him/her/me give them oral sex even though they didn't want to	68.2	18.2	4.5	9.1

Table 10 presents the information regarding the question of “Have any of the following incidents happened to anyone you know, during your time” in your organization. The results from this section revealed that a majority of the participants responded that they did not know anyone who had experienced harassment or assault of any kind. However, 31.8% of participants stated that they did know someone who “had been in an abusive relationship” and “been discriminated against by a student due to their race or gender”.

Table 10

*Experience of Others (N = 22)*

Variable	No	Yes
Been stalked or followed	77.3	22.7
Received unwanted messages, texts, emails, etc. from someone who makes you uncomfortable	72.7	27.3
Been in a relationship that was controlling or abusive (physically, mentally, emotionally, sexually, financially)	68.2	31.8
Been sexually harassed by a student	72.7	27.3
Been sexually harassed by a faculty/staff member	100.0	0.0
Been discriminated against by a student due to my race or gender	68.2	31.8
Been discriminated against by a faculty/staff member due to my race and gender	72.7	22.7
Someone TRIED to touch, kiss, or rub against the private areas of his/her/my body, or tried to remove some of his/her/my clothes, even though you didn't want them to	77.3	22.7
Someone DID touch, kiss, or rub against the private areas of his/her/my body, or removed some of his/her/my clothes, even though you didn't want them to	81.8	18.2
Someone TRIED to penetrate him/her/me, or make him/her/me penetrate them, even though they did not want to	90.9	9.1
Someone DID penetrate him/her/me, or made him/her penetrate them, even though they did not want to	86.4	13.6
Someone TRIED to perform oral sex on him/her/me, or give them oral sex even though it did not want to	90.9	9.1
Someone DID perform oral sex on him/her/me, or made him/her/me give them oral sex even though it didn't want to	86.4	13.6

Table 11 presents the information regarding the question of “I have reported to the following people about the incident” (select apply to all). Out of the 22 respondents who replied to this question, 54.5% stated that they reported an incident to a friend, classmate or peer. Only one participant, or 4.5% of the participants, responded that they reported an incident to the Title IX Deputy Coordinator.

Table 11

*Having Reported to (N=22)*

Variable	Yes	% of Total
Friend, classmate, or peer	12	54.5
Professor, or another faculty member	2	9.1
Counselor	2	9.1
Family members	1	4.5
Coach	1	4.5
Police	1	4.5
Title IX Deputy Coordinator	1	4.5
Chaplain, or spiritual advisor	1	4.5

To the question “Did any of the following negative thoughts or concerns cross your mind when you were deciding whether or not to share or report your experience?”, only 14 students responded. Eight students did not participate in this question. Of those 14 responses, 23% of the respondents answered that they “Felt like they were partly at fault for what had happened”. About 14% of the respondents stated that they “Did not think the situation was serious enough to share.” Although there were eight participants

who did not respond, 27% of the participants stated that “It was not clear whether or not harm was intended or that there was not enough evidence to prove there was an assault”.

Table 12

*Percentages of Responses as to Why He/She Did Not Report (N=22)*

Answer	Percentage
Administration would not take appropriate actions	18%
Did not think it was serious enough to share	14%
No answer	36%
Not clear that harm was intended or there was not enough evidence	27%
Afraid of retaliation by the person who did it, or from others	18%
It happened in the past/the people who these things have happened to have either reported it or moved on since then.	4%
Felt that I was at least partly at fault or it wasn't totally the other person's fault	23%
Did not want any legal action to take place.	13%

The final question of the survey asked the participants to explain “What they think the Title IX office could do better.” There were only 16 responses, but 36% stated that the office needs to be more open to talk about sexual assault, as well as better inform students about the resources the Title IX office offers. A few respondents (27%) stated that they wished the Title IX office hosted more activities on campus that informed students about Title IX resources. One participant explained that they wished there were stricter rules about hazing and bullying.

Table 13

*Suggestions on How the Title IX Office Could Improve (N=22)*

Answer	Percentage
Be more open about talking about Title IX and sexual assault on campus.	36%
Be more proactive on campus and host more events that educate students about Title IX and sexual assault	27%
Create rules that are stricter about hazing and bullying.	4%
No response	27%

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

Sexual misconduct is a nation-wide concern. However, over the years, awareness of the problem of sexual assault has grown. Regardless of awareness, there is little to no research about the importance of educating students and faculty about sexual assault and how to prevent it (Edwards et al., 2018). This study looked at the current knowledge of students at a faith-based university about sexual assault and Title IX. The results of this study can help universities understand that, even if students are knowledgeable about Title IX and sexual assault, it is still important to be proactive and host activities on the campus. This knowledge will allow universities to continue to be more open about talking about sexual assault and Title IX, as well as to continue to address this nation-wide concern.

#### **Discussion of Major Findings**

As discussed in the literature review, there is little to no research on the importance of implementing Title IX programs on campus (Edwards et al., 2018). Despite the students knowing what the Title IX office is, the data provided evidence that there were still parts about what the Title IX office does that students were unclear about. Noting back to Table 3, there were 31.8% of students who did not know if Title IX only handles cases about sexual assault, and did not know if the office took cases that involved faculty or staff. When the participants were asked whether or not the university would take a report seriously, about 27.3% of the students did not know. Of the 22 responses,

about 31.8% of the participants also did not know if the university would support the complainant, as well as did not know if the university would take preventative action against retaliation from the offender or others.

Although there were a few participants who were not as knowledgeable about Title IX and sexual assault as others, there was still a majority of students who were knowledgeable. Regardless of either outcome of measurements of the student's knowledge, the results showed that there is still a need for Title IX to have a stronger presence on campus. In the results, the participants explained that Title IX not only fails to inform students about the services they offer, but also does not provide proactive activities on campus for students to attend and participate in. One thing to note in the data is the response stating that "Hazing within pledging is fun and an important part of the nature of clubs." This acceptance of harassment confirms that, even at a faith-based university, there is a high tolerance of sexual misconduct that feeds into the level of "rape acceptance" on campus (Spencer, Mallory, Toews, Stith, & Wood, 2017). Additionally, the results from the previous question "Did any of the following negative thoughts or concerns cross your mind when you were deciding whether or not to share or report your experience?" addresses the level of tolerance on campus. The participants expressed that they felt like "the university would not take appropriate action" and that the "situation was not serious enough to report". Although there were no tests conducted to measure the levels of tolerance this faith-based university has, the descriptive analysis of the study suggests that students feel like the university does not take sexual misconduct seriously. It can be implied that the lack of seriousness from the university can affect student's willingness to report an assault.

Ultimately, the results provided evidence that, even though the participants were knowledgeable about Title IX and sexual assault, there is still a need for the Title IX office to offer more opportunities for students to attend informative and proactive activities on campus.

### **Implications of Findings**

Even if the participants were knowledgeable about Title IX and sexual assault, there was still evidence that the office is not doing its best to educate students about the services it offers. This implication means that faith-based universities, ACU in particular, need to implement programs that educate students about Title IX and sexual assault.

### **Implications for Practice**

Since the results suggested that there is a lack of Title IX presence on the campus, it is important that the office make an effort to get out in front of students more times throughout the year. This can be addressed by the Title IX office through the implementation of more programs. Programs can be as simple as hosting more activities on campus that are educational, such as forums or chapel discussions. The Deputy Coordinator (D.C.) of the Title IX office can also get out on in front of students with information about the office's services more often. For example, the D.C. can have an information table in the university's Campus Center every so often with pamphlets, office merchandise, or other forms of informative resources.

### **Implications for Policy**

The results from this study can imply that there is a need for changes in policies on this faith-based university's campus. The university can implement a policy that requires the Title IX office to host mandatory informative forums that all students have to

attend. This would allow the Title IX office to reach every student at the university and decrease the number of students who are not receiving information about the services that the Title IX office offers. Additionally, the university should implement stricter rules regarding hazing during the pledging process. Not tolerating hazing and assault during pledging shows students that the university will take preventive action and take sexual misconduct seriously. This could decrease the level of tolerance of sexual misconduct on the campus, as well as diminish the campus's rates of "rape acceptance".

### **Implications for Research**

Due to the lack of research, it can be inferred that more universities and colleges need to measure the current knowledge of students about Title IX and sexual assault. Once the university and college address this, there is an opportunity for researchers to begin to look at the benefits of implementing Title IX programs on campuses. Each of these research studies opens doors for universities and colleges to find ways to implement effective programs on their campuses. Once effective programs are implemented, universities and colleges can begin to address the issues of sexual assault, and potentially minimize sexual assault on their campuses.

### **Limitations**

Limitations, particularly on an issue of such magnitude and sensitivity as sexual assault, as well as the office of Title IX on a faith-based university, are certain to present themselves. The most reflective limitations in this study, perhaps, are the sample size of the study and demographics. In the results section of this study, the lack of male presence in the participants can be observed. There was one male participant and 21 females. This limitation effected the representation of the male population at the university in regard to

the survey. The sample size was another limitation that effected the results of the survey. Because there were only 22 participants, the representation of the student body at the university was negatively impacted. The small sample size also affected the diversity of answers for the survey. The participants who responded appeared to be knowledgeable about Title IX; however, there may be students at the university who were not chosen to complete the survey who are not knowledgeable.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to measure the current knowledge of students at a faith-based university about sexual assault and Title IX. The data and results of this study showed that, even when students were well informed about what the Title IX office does, the participants still expressed that there was a need for the Title IX office to be more present on campus. The results from this study should encourage faith-based universities to start talking about sexual assault and Title IX on their campuses more often.

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## APPENDIX

### IRB Approval Letter

<p><b>ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY</b> <i>Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World</i></p> <p>Office of Research and Sponsored Programs 320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103 325-676-2885</p> <p>March 18, 2019</p>	
<p>Hannah Harrell Department of Social Work</p>	
<p>Dear Hannah,</p>	
<p>On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "A Descriptive Study on Knowledge and Perceptions about Title IX among University Members",</p>	
<p>(IRB# 19-015 ) is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.</p>	
<p>If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.</p>	
<p>I wish you well with your work.</p>	
<p>Sincerely,</p>	
<p><i>Megan Roth</i></p>	
<p>Megan Roth, Ph.D. Director of Research and Sponsored Programs</p>	
<p><small>Our Promise: ACU is a vibrant, innovative, Christ-centered community that engages students in authentic spiritual and intellectual growth, equipping them to make a real difference in the world.</small></p>	