

COOPERATION, ARREST, AND FILING CHARGES: AN EXAMINATION OF
VICTIM, POLICE, AND PROSECUTOR DECISION MAKING IN ADOLESCENT
SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES

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ABSTRACT

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Sexual assault case processing has received increased attention from scholars, with promising implications for the criminal justice system. Despite the recent increase in attention, there remains a dearth of literature on adolescent sexual assault case processing. Indeed, few studies have examined adolescent assault case processing, with those limited studies resulting in inconsistent findings. The present thesis addresses this gap in sexual assault case processing literature by utilizing 289 adolescent sexual assault case files from Los Angeles County to assess the decision-making factors that influence adolescent victim cooperation, arrest, and initial charge filing. Theoretical, empirical, policy, and practice implications are discussed.

KEY WORDS: Sexual assault, Case processing, Decision making, Victim cooperation, Police arrest, Initial charge filing, Adolescent victimization.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Research consistently indicates that various decision-making stages are important for understanding how sexual assault cases traverse the criminal justice system (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Bouffard, 2000; Campbell, Menaker, & King, 2015; Du Mont, Miller, & Myhr, 2003; Kaiser, O’Neal, & Spohn, 2017; Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990; LaFree, 1981; O’Neal, Beckman, & Spohn, 2016; Sleath & Bull, 2017; Tasca, Rodriguez, Spohn, & Koss, 2013). Specifically, decision making by law enforcement, prosecution, and victims are salient in the case processing of sexual assault (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Kaiser et al., 2017; O’Neal, 2017; Spohn & Holleran, 2001; Tasca et al., 2013). Victims disclose their victimization to informal or formal support systems and decide whether to participate in the progression of the sexual assault case (Finkelhor & Wolak, 2003; Kaiser et al., 2017; O’Neal, 2017). Victims are first introduced to the criminal justice system from contact with law enforcement, and officers’ involvement with the case continues until disposition (LaFree, 1981). Victims are then introduced to the court system where prosecutors’ decision making influences the sexual assault cases’ journey in the court system (O’Neal, Spohn, & Tellis, 2015). Over the past several decades, scholars have been successful in addressing the call for research examining sexual assault case processing (LaFree, 1981); however, a gap in inquiry exists regarding the factors that influence sexual assault case processing in incidents involving adolescents (but see: Campbell et al., 2015).

The relatively small body of research on adolescent sexual assault case processing and factors that shape decision making has yielded mixed results (Beichner & Spohn,

2012; Campbell et al., 2015; Hicks & Tite, 1998). Some studies find that decision-making factors for adolescent sexual assault cases differ from those for adult cases (Campbell et al., 2015). Other studies suggest that the age of the victim does not influence the decision-making stages of sexual assault case processing. For instance, Hicks and Tite's (1998) study found that as the age of the victim increases, their perceived victim credibility decreases by law enforcement, social workers, and school personnel. Conversely, Beichner and Spohn (2012) found victim age does not influence their perceived victim credibility. This is one example highlighting the inconsistencies in research examining the factors that influence decision-making in adolescent sexual assault case processing. Therefore, there is a need for research that extensively examines the factors that influence decision making in adolescent sexual assault case processing (Campbell et al., 2015).

This study contributes to the existing body of literature by facilitating a discussion on the decision-making factors that influence adolescent sexual assault case processing, focusing on arrest, initial charge filing, and victim cooperation. Specifically, this study adds theoretical, empirical, and policy contributions to sexual assault case processing literature. The following sections discuss necessary topics related to juvenile sexual assault case processing decision making. First, sexual victimization rates and reporting are discussed in efforts of presenting the prevalence of adolescent sexual assault. Second, a broad discussion of case processing is presented, focusing on victim cooperation, arrest, and initial charging decision making. Third, gaps in the adolescent sexual assault case processing literature are discussed to showcase the need for a further examination of

adolescent sexual assault case processing. Finally, a discussion of the current study presents the inquiries that further the topic of adolescent sexual assault case processing.

Prevalence and Reporting

Sexual victimization against juveniles and adults is pervasive (Stein & Nofziger, 2008). Forms of sexual violence include forced penetration, sexual coercion, unwanted sexual contact, and non-contact unwanted sexual experiences (Black et al., 2011). Lifetime prevalence of sexual victimization indicates that 44.6% of females experience some form of sexual violence within their lifetime (Black et al., 2011). Regarding the victimization of adolescents, the 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS; Black et al., 2011) indicates that 42.2% of victims experienced rape before the age of 18. Moreover, of the 42.2% of those who experienced the sexual victimization, 29.9% experienced their first rape between the ages of 11 and 17 (Black et al., 2011). Additionally, the 2016 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS) survey found that 10.3% of female high school students reported experiencing forced sexual intercourse within their lifetime (Kann et al., 2016). Prevalence differences found in both national surveys are attributed to the retrospective nature of the NISVS; whereas, the YRBS survey data collection is reported while the individual is still in adolescence. Overall, adults are more likely to report experiences of sexual victimization that are further in the past (e.g., that occurred during adolescence) than individuals who experienced victimization more recently (Black et al., 2011; Kann et al., 2016).

Despite high sexual assault victimization rates, research indicates that few adolescents will report their sexual victimization to law enforcement. It is well known that sexual assault incidents involving adults are underreported; however, research

indicates that adolescent reporting of sexual assault is characterized by even lower levels of reporting (Breiding, 2014; Eaton et al., 2012; Feldman-Summers & Ashworth, 1981; Pino & Meier, 1999). Approximately 10% of female high school students self-reported sexual victimization (Kann et al., 2016). Additionally, the younger in adolescence the less likely the victim will report their victimization to law enforcement (Finkelhor & Wolak, 2003). Changes in the reporting of juvenile sexual assault cases have occurred over the past sixty years as a result of legal reforms aimed at increasing the visibility of these crimes. For example, following the implementation of mandatory reporting laws surrounding child abuse, more child and adolescent abuse cases were brought to the attention of law enforcement (Maguire, 2009). However, adolescent sexual assault victims' decision to report their victimization is complex due to their relationship with the perpetrator. For example, adolescent victims may not have access to appropriate authorities to disclose their victimization, and they may fear that disclosing the abuse may separate their family (Hanson, Resnick, Saunders, Kilpatrick, & Best, 1999).

Low reporting rates for adolescent sexual assault incidents are likely attributed to their fear of risky behaviors becoming known, retaliation from the perpetrator, and worry over their case not being perceived as serious (Finkelhor & Wolak, 2003; Turner, Ku, Rogers, Lindberg, Pleck, & Sonenstein, 1998). Additionally, adolescents are more likely to confide in other officials (e.g., teachers) than law enforcement (Finkelhor & Ormrod, 1999). In addition, adolescent victims' reluctance to report their victimization is associated with the criminal justice system's lack of appropriate handling of sexual assault cases (Christensen, 2016). Advocates of social reform and scholars contend that

the treatment of sexual assault victims influence cooperation and future reporting (e.g., victim blaming and disbelief in crime occurrence; Daly & Bouhours, 2010).

Sexual Assault Case Processing

Despite efforts aimed at alleviating problems associated with the progression of sexual assault cases within the criminal justice system, attrition remains a problem (Beichner & Spohn, 2005). Attrition of cases pertains to the removal of the case from the criminal justice system before the conviction of a perpetrator (Fitzgerald, 2006; Niekerk, 2016). In other words, attrition is the failure of a case to proceed to conviction following initial law enforcement intervention. Of the sexual assault cases presented to law enforcement, only 35% resulted in arrest of the perpetrator (Alderden & Ullman, 2012). Attrition is also likely in sexual assault cases during the prosecution process, with only half of sexual assault cases resulting in a felony conviction (Alderden & Ullman, 2012). Specific to the current thesis, one prior study found that less than one-third of cases involving adolescent victims resulted in an arrest (Snyder, 2000, also see Fitzgerald, 2006). Cases involving children and adolescent sexual abuse are less likely result in a conviction. Low conviction rates are associated with the increased likelihood of charges being dismissed with child and adolescent cases when comparing to adult cases. Research estimates that only 8% of sexual assault cases involving adolescents reach conviction (Fitzgerald, 2006).

Criminal justice actors' decision making influences all aspects of case progression in the criminal justice system. However, decision making is particularly salient within sexual assault case processing. Each key player (victim, law enforcement, and prosecution) influences the outcome of the case (O'Neal & Spohn, 2017). Meyers and

LaFree (1982) suggest that criminal justice actors use different decision-making factors when assessing sexual assault cases. Additionally, each actor's decision making is influenced by their perception of future decision makers' interpretation of the sexual assault case (Beichner & Spohn, 2005; Campbell et al., 2015). Therefore, assessing multiple salient decision-making points will allow for a greater understanding of sexual assault case processing.

Regarding initial stages with the criminal justice system, the victim must decide whether or not to initiate contact with the system by reporting the incident (Tasca et al., 2013). Sexual assault cases heavily rely on victim reporting as compared to other crimes. For example, violent crime does not need to depend on the victim reporting due to the availability of witnesses and physical evidence (Meyers & LaFree, 1982). As noted in past research, race and gender influence the rate of reporting sexual assault incidents to law enforcement (Bachman, 1998; Chen & Ullman, 2010; Pino & Meier, 1999). Following the victim's decision to report the incident, the victim must decide whether or not to cooperate with law enforcement (Kaiser et al., 2017).¹ The victim's decision to cooperate with law enforcement is more likely when the victim perceives the incident as a "real rape"² (Estrich, 1987; Kaiser et al., 2017; Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990; Tellis & Spohn, 2008).

Victim cooperation is important to discuss in this thesis, as extant literature stresses the salience of victim cooperation regarding the decisions of criminal justice

¹ A cooperative victim refers to a victim that is willing to participate in the processing of the sexual assault case (Tutty, Wylie, Mackenzie, Ursel, & Koshan, 2008).

² See Estrich, S (1987). Real Rape. "Real rape" encompasses the mistaken notion that real victims of rape are those who experienced nonconsensual sexual intercourse perpetrated by a stranger with a weapon and resulting in demonstrable injury.

actors (Kaiser et al., 2017; Spohn & Tellis, 2014). The presence of victim cooperation in sexual assault case processing increases the likelihood of law enforcement and prosecution decisions, as well as the victim receiving a favorable case outcome, such as influencing the likelihood of arresting the perpetrator, prosecution of the case, and securing a conviction (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Spohn & Tellis, 2014). Specifically, non-stranger sexual assault cases where the victim cooperates have an increased likelihood of arrest and prosecution filing charges (Spohn & Tellis, 2014). Thus, a lack of victim cooperation escalates the likelihood of case attrition through actor decision making such as arrest and initial filing (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Kaiser et al., 2017; Spohn, Beichner, & Davis-Frenzel, 2001; Spohn & Tellis, 2014).

Law enforcement are considered the gatekeepers of the criminal justice system (Kerstetter, 1990; Tasca et al., 2013) because their decisions influence the outcome of cases. Their decisions encompass whether the incident will garner a formal report, what resources will be allocated to the investigation, what charges will be listed on the report, whether the potential perpetrator will be arrested, and if the case will be forwarded to prosecution (O'Neal & Spohn, 2017). These decision points are salient to sexual assault case processing because law enforcement decides whether or not to introduce the case to the system as well as whether or not the case will proceed to later stages of case processing (Spohn & Tellis, 2012). For example, law enforcement may decide to record a formal report but then refuse to arrest the suspect. Numerous factors shape these decision points; law enforcement officer's decisions are influenced by the evidence procured, criminal justice policies, cooperation of the victim, the influence of future actions of other criminal justice personnel, victim characteristics, risky behaviors, and officer

attitudes (Bachmann, 1998; Beichner & Spohn, 2012; Bouffard, 2000; Frohmann, 1991; Kerstetter, 1990; Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990; Pattavina, Morabito, & Williams, 2016; Sleath & Bull, 2017; Spohn & Tellis, 2014; Tasca et al., 2013).

After law enforcement decides to arrest, court actors must decide whether to progress the case through the court. Prosecutors are depicted as the controllers of the courthouse (Neubauer, 1973), because prosecutors affect whether or not cases progress into the court system. Thus, prosecutors make the ultimate decision of whether or not the perpetrator is charged with a crime. If the prosecutor does not file an initial charge on the suspect, the case progression through the system ends. Prosecutorial decision making is based on facts associated with the case (legal factors) and facts irrelevant to the case (extra-legal factors; Alderden & Long, 2016; Kennedy, 2012; Spohn et al., 2001; Spohn & Holleran, 2001; Spohn & Tellis, 2014). Legal factors include the seriousness of offense, establishment of evidence, and blameworthiness of the offender towards the crime (Kennedy, 2012; Spohn & Holleran, 2001; Steffensmeier, Ulmer, & Kramer, 1998). Extra-legal factors pertain to factors involving demographic attributes, victim characteristics, risky behaviors, and inconsistent reporting of the incident (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Beichner & Spohn, 2012; Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990). Prior research indicates the presence of extra-legal factors may be more pertinent to investigators than legal factors due to limited availability of evidence in sexual assault cases (Spohn & Holleran, 2001).

Gaps in Literature

Broadly, existing scholarship indicates the need for research examining criminal justice actors' perceptions on sexual assault cases (Campbell et al., 2015; LaFree, 1981;

Sleath & Bull, 2017). Understanding their decision making has always been complicated by the hindrance sexual assault misconceptions play in the case processing of sexual assault (Du Mont et al., 2003; Sleath & Bull, 2017). Existing research indicates that criminal justice actors partake in rape myths and victim blaming (Frohmann, 1991; Page, 2010; Schuller & Stewart, 2000; Sleath & Bull, 2012; Venema, 2016). Prior scholarship suggests a need for future research to examine the purview of sexual assault cases from the perspective of multiple actors associated in sexual assault cases. By understanding how law enforcement, prosecutors, and victims interpret certain aspects of sexual assault cases, researchers can craft policy recommendations to combat the misperceptions of sexual assault. In the future, as the misperceptions of sexual assault alleviate, victims of sexual assault will perceive their victimization as legitimate. As legitimacy increases, victims reporting of the incident is likely to increase.

In addition to knowledge complications associated with sexual assault misconceptions, the majority of sexual assault case processing research focuses on adult victims (Kaiser et al, 2017; Tasca et al., 2013). In other words, extant literature too commonly excludes adolescent victims from analyses (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Kaiser et al., 2017; Tasca et al., 2013). However, more than 40% of female victims experience sexual victimization before the age of 18 (Black et al., 2011); therefore, a relatively large portion of sexual assault victims, adolescents, are not accounted for in studies on adult sexual assault victims.

Research that has included adolescent victims in the study of sexual assault case processing has produced inconsistent results. Hicks and Tite (1998) found that law enforcement perceived younger adolescents as more credible when comparing to older

adolescents; however, another study found no difference between the ages of adolescence (McCauley & Parker, 2001). Additionally, other studies have examined victim age and victim credibility and found inconsistent results (Beichner & Spohn, 2012; Spears & Spohn, 1997). Spears and Spohn's (1997) study found older adolescents were more likely to be seen as credible; however, Beichner & Spohn's (2012) study failed to find differences between adolescent ages. The combination of these gaps indicate that adolescent sexual assault case processing research is underdeveloped. Therefore, in an effort to extend the theoretical, empirical, and policy contributions of sexual assault case processing, this study aims to address these voids through salient adolescent case processing decision-making factors.

The Current Study

This study examines three stages of case processing to facilitate an understanding of decision making with adolescent sexual assault cases. This study will address the gap in knowledge on adolescent sexual assault case processing by answering the following research questions:

- 1) What factors influence adolescent victims' decision to cooperate with law enforcement?
- 2) What factors influence law enforcement's decision to arrest in adolescent sexual assault cases?
- 3) What factors influence prosecutorial decisions to file initial charges in adolescent sexual assault cases?

The current study uses secondary data obtained from 944 sexual assault case studies. Data collection occurred in 2008; the collection of case studies was a part of a

larger collection of data regarding decision factors of sexual assault cases processed through the criminal justice system with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD; Spohn & Tellis, 2014). During data collection, Spohn & Tellis (2014) obtained sexual assault cases reported to the two law enforcement agencies of female victims age 12 or older. For the purpose of this study, adolescence is defined as individuals between the ages of 12 and 17. The secondary data limits the minimum age of adolescence; however, the age range used is consistent with prior literature (Black et al., 2011; Kann et al., 2016; Snyder, 2012).

Findings from this study will contribute to the existing body of literature by providing insight into the theoretical, empirical, and policy implications of adolescent sexual assault case processing. First, this study aims to contribute to the theoretical case processing literature by addressing theoretically important variables in the context of adolescent sexual assault case processing. This study aims to determine whether the factors associated with adult case processing pertains to adolescent sexual assault cases. Second, this research will contribute to the empirical body of literature by assessing adolescent sexual assault case processing through rich methodologies (e.g., the use of data from diverse law enforcement agencies and law enforcement case studies of sexual assault cases). Last, this study will inform policies and practices on sexual assault case processing, generally, and to adolescents, specifically. The study examines three stages of case processing; thus, this study will aid in facilitating discussion regarding current policies and practices regarding case handling within different stages of the criminal justice system.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This chapter reviews the body of literature dedicated to examining the decision-making stages of sexual assault case processing. Specifically, this chapter addresses victim cooperation, arrest decisions, and the decision to file initial charges. Each section discusses the factors (e.g., legal and extra-legal) that impact each decision-making stage and the factors that specifically contribute to adolescent sexual assault case processing decisions.

Victim Cooperation in Sexual Assault Cases

Prior literature confirms the salient role of victim cooperation in sexual assault case processing (Kaiser et al., 2017; O’Neal, 2017), with extant research noting that victim cooperation shapes arrest and initial charge decisions (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990; O’Neal et al., 2016; Spohn & Tellis, 2014; Wood, Rosay, Postle, & TePas, 2011). Despite this important role, victim cooperation with law enforcement and prosecution may be difficult to acquire (Roesler & Wind, 1994; Spohn et al., 2001; Tellis & Spohn 2008). This is particularly true for younger victims whose cooperation may be hindered by fears of being perceived as an illegitimate victim, retaliation from perpetrator, punishment from others, how the incident might affect their family’s reputation, in addition to their shame surrounding the incident (Roesler & Wind, 1994; Sauzier, 1989). These hesitancies surrounding cooperation complicate case processing, as victim cooperation increases the chances of a desirable case outcome for the victim, such as an increased likelihood of suspect identification and

acceptability of the case by prosecution (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Spohn et al., 2001; Spohn & Tellis, 2014; Tasca et al., 2013).

As soon as sexual assault victims initiate contact with the criminal justice system, they encounter numerous decision points regarding their cooperation. Victim cooperation begins with their initial report of the incident and concludes with cooperating with prosecution (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Kaiser et al., 2017; O'Neal, 2017). Research examining the victim's decision to engage with the criminal justice system began during the 1970's with rape law reforms facilitating discussion on the reporting of sexual assaults (Bachman, 1998; Horney & Spohn, 1991; Lizotte, 1985). Researchers hypothesized the reform would increase the likelihood of reporting to the police (Bachman, 1998; Horney & Spohn, 1991). However, contemporary research continues to suggest that sexual assault cases remain vastly underreported (Breiding, 2014; Feldman-Summers & Ashworth, 1981; Pino & Meier, 1999). The prevalence of reporting sexual victimization is between 6-34% (Daly & Bouhours, 2010; Du Mont et al., 2003; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000; Truman & Langton, 2015).

Similar to sexual assault incidents involving adults, adolescent sexual assault victimization is vastly underreported (Black et al., 2011; Eaton et al., 2012; Snyder, 2000). According to Eaton and colleagues (2012), the prevalence of reporting for sexual assaults among adolescents is lower than the average prevalence rate of adult reporting (11.8% reporting rate for adolescent females). Therefore, disparities between adult and adolescent sexual assault case processing starts early with reporting. It should be noted that past research primarily examines the reporting rates of adult samples (see Black et al., 2011; Eaton et al., 2012; Snyder, 2000). Limiting scholarship to adult reporting and

neglecting adolescent reporting presents problems because adolescent sexual assaults constitute approximately 30% of all self-reported sexual assaults (Black et al., 2011). Research is crucial for understanding adolescent sexual assault victims' decision making regarding how reporting victimization can facilitate cooperation with the criminal justice system.

The likelihood of cooperation and the factors that influence cooperation may differentiate between adults and adolescents due to different experiences and case factors between the two age groups. Research suggests that adolescent victims may not report their sexual victimization due to repression of past memories (Roesler & Wind, 1994). And, adolescents express worry about how the incident will impact the family (Roesler & Wind, 1994). Both of these cooperation factors are unique to adolescent sexual assault cases (Roesler & Wind, 1994). Additionally, adolescent victims tend to confide their victimization to parental figures (Finkelhor, 1984; Finkelhor & Wolak, 2003; Hanson et al., 2003); conversely, parental figures may also be the perpetrators of adolescent sexual victimization. Adolescents are more likely to know their perpetrators compared to adult sexual assault victims; therefore, they are less likely to press charges due to their relationship (Muram, Hostetter, Jones, & Speck, 1995). In addition, adolescent case processing is more likely to have a parent involved in their case through their level of support (Muram et al., 1995). With approximately 30% of self-reported sexual victimization occurring in adolescence and low reporting rates (Black et al., 2011; Finkelhor, Wolak, & Berliner, 2001), it is important to understand the factors that influence adolescent victims' cooperation with the criminal justice system in efforts of enhancing adolescent sexual assault reporting.

This section will assess the body of literature surrounding victim cooperation. Specifically, a discussion of factors that influence victims to participate with the criminal justice system will be provided. Overall, the review of literature will include reporting, cooperation with law enforcement, and cooperation with prosecution. This section also discusses factors that prompt adolescents to report and cooperate.

Reporting

Adolescent sexual victimization, like sexual victimization generally, tends to occur in the private sphere and lack the presence of witnesses. Thus, adolescents are often responsible for initiating contact with and disclosing to others in order to initiate a law enforcement response (Hanson et al., 2003).³ However, disclosure and contact with law enforcement may depend on the adolescent sexual assault victim's age, mandatory reporting laws, and case characteristics.

Factors shaping reporting. Victim age is one factor associated with the rate of reporting adolescent sexual victimization (Finkelhor & Wolak, 2003; Hanson et al., 2003; Stein & Nofziger, 2008). The likelihood of reporting decreases when sexual assault victims are in early adolescence compared to adolescents in their mid-teens (Finkelhor & Wolak, 2003; Hanson et al., 2003; Nagel, Putnam, Noll, & Trickett, 1997). Finkelhor and Wolak (2003) contend that the victimization behavior is perceived as normal acts in adolescence. Therefore, victims of sexual assault or whom victims disclose to may not perceive the act as sexual assault. Hanson and colleagues (2003) argue that the relationship between decreased reporting and younger adolescence is likely a result of a

³ Prior literature has examined reporting as a component of victim cooperation with law enforcement, however, the majority of the sample cooperates at the reporting stage (O'Neal, 2017). For this assessment of reporting, therefore, it is important to understand the factors that influence adolescent victim's decision to report to law enforcement.

reduction in language development, which indicates that younger victims may lack the skills or development to disclose their victimization. Even considering the barriers adolescent victims encounter when reporting, approximately one-third of adolescent sexual assault victims report their sexual assaults to law enforcement (Hanson et al., 2003).

Research indicates that certain case characteristics influence the victim's decision to report sexual victimization (Finkelhor & Wolak, 2003; Hanson et al., 2003). This body of work yields inconsistent findings regarding the nature and direction of these relationships. First, the severity of offense is posited to influence adolescent reporting; however, research has concluded differing outcomes. Some studies note that as injury severity increases, the adolescent victim decreases their likelihood of reporting the incident (Hampton & Newberger, 1985; Hanson et al., 2003). On the other hand, other studies have found that in cases where the adolescent receives severe injuries, their reporting rate increases (Arata, 1998; Hanson et al., 2003). Second, as the relational proximity increases, the less likely the sexual victimization is reported (Sauzier, 1989); however, Hanson and colleagues (2003) found the opposite. According to their study, a perpetrator classified as a relative increased the likelihood of the victims' disclosure. Further complicating this body of work, in cases where the offender-victim relationship consisted of a father and child, the likelihood of disclosure decreased (Hanson et al., 2003).

Context of reporting. Adolescent victims of sexual assault are more likely to report their victimization to parents or friends as compared to law enforcement officers (Stein & Nofziger, 2008). Confiding in peers or parental figures can decrease the

likelihood of service provider contact. Adolescents that disclose to parental figures and peers are less likely to seek out and/or receive adequate counseling for their sexual victimization (Stein & Nofziger, 2008). Additionally, when adolescents disclose their incident to a friend, the likelihood of the incident being reported to law enforcement decreases—this also contributes to a decreased likelihood of receiving services (Stein & Nofziger, 2008). In addition to whom adolescents disclose their victimization to, gender influences their likelihood of reporting. Female adolescent victims were more likely to report their sexual victimization than male victims (Hanson et al., 2003), which is consistent with literature on adult samples (Black et al., 2011; Chen & Ullman, 2010; Pino & Meier, 1999).

Research finds that mandatory reporting increases the likelihood of sexual victimization being reported to law enforcement. Finkelhor, Wolak, and Berliner's (2001) work found that cases involving adolescent sexual victimization were reported at a higher rate compared to cases involving adult sexual victimization (also see: Daly & Bouhours, 2010); however, higher rates of adolescent reporting is attributed to mandatory reporting laws of child abuse (Kellogg, 2005; Muram et al., 1995). According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 48 states require professionals to report incidents of child victimization. Those characterized as professionals tend to have frequent contact with children and adolescents. These mandatory reporters include teachers, law enforcement, child care providers, medical professionals, and social workers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2014). Surprisingly, even with mandatory reporting laws, professionals may not report suspected child abuse. Research indicates that mandated reporters are sometimes reluctant to report sexual

victimization involving children and adolescents because of their fear of disrupting the family dynamic (Roesler & Wind, 1994). Reluctance to report among these professionals can also be attributed to the lack of training on child or adolescent abuse (Bensley et al., 2004).

In addition to disclosure and mandatory reporting, the nature of data collection influences the interpretation of reporting rates. For example, official reporting sources indicate that adolescent sexual victimization is primarily perpetrated by family members (Stein & Nofziger, 2008). However, studies using self-report data collection strategies indicate that family sexual victimization only accounts for one-fifth of all cases (Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, & Smith, 1990). Instead, these studies find that adolescent victims are more likely to be sexually victimized by other adolescents (Finkelhor et al., 1990; Stein & Nofziger, 2008). One explanation for the discrepancies between official reports and self-report studies is the victim's fear of reporting to official authorities (Roesler & Wind, 1994). Adolescent sexual assault victims often do not disclose to law enforcement because of their fear surrounding perpetrator retaliation and victimization-based shame (Roesler & Wind, 1994). Additionally, official reports often represent "real rape" case characteristics; for example, stranger sexual assault cases are more likely to be reported (Alderden & Long, 2016). These studies suggest that research that relies on self-report data may provide a more reliable representation of sexual assault prevalence.

Adolescent reporting research is mixed regarding the effects of age, mandatory reporting laws, and case characteristics. More research is needed to better understand the relationships between these factors and victim cooperation with the criminal justice system. However, once a victim initiates contact with law enforcement and reports their

sexual victimization, they encounter subsequent decision points where they can either maintain or withdraw their cooperation. The decision to cooperate with law enforcement and prosecution is highly important in case processing. Understanding why victims of sexual assault cooperate or withdraw cooperation can facilitate more informed law enforcement and prosecution policies and practices on cooperation (Kaiser et al., 2017).

Cooperation with Police

Victims consider multiple factors when deciding whether or not to cooperate with law enforcement. Research indicates that the likelihood of victim cooperation increases when certain victim, suspect, and case characteristics are present (Bouffard, 2000; Kaiser et al., 2017; O'Neal, 2017; Schuller & Steward, 2000; Tellis & Spohn, 2008). For example, sexual assault victims are more likely to cooperate with law enforcement when they perceive their experience as a serious crime (Kaiser et al., 2017; Kestetter & Van Winkle, 1990) and when their perpetrator is a stranger (Tellis & Spohn, 2008; O'Neal, 2017). In addition, cooperation is more likely in cases involving evidence of crime occurrence (Bouffard, 2000; Tasca et al., 2013); however, evidence in sexual assault cases is hard to obtain (Campbell et al., 2015). For example, sexual assault cases are less likely than other crimes to involve witnesses to the crime and physical evidence (Tasca et al., 2013). For these reasons, evidence of crime occurrence often becomes dependent on the cooperation of the victim (Bouffard, 2000). In fact, once the victim reports the victimization, the victim becomes a witness to the offense (O'Neal, 2017). Additionally, the likelihood of victim cooperation decreases when certain victim, suspect, and case characteristics are present. Specifically, sexual assault victims are less likely to cooperate with law enforcement if they fear retaliation from their perpetrator (Burgess &

Holmstrom, 1978). Furthermore, their decision to cooperate with law enforcement decreases when involvement with drug or alcohol consumption is present (Schuller & Stewart, 2000; Tellis & Spohn, 2008). Additionally, victims are less likely to cooperate when assaulted by an acquaintance or someone they are intimately involved with (Tellis & Spohn, 2008).

In addition to victim, suspect, and case characteristics, prior literature suggests that law enforcement's perceptions and treatment of victims' influence victim cooperation (Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990; O'Neal, 2017). Law enforcement's case perceptions may influence whether or not a victim decides to maintain cooperation (Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990). For example, when police officers hold beliefs that are consistent with rape myths, investigation effort and resources dedicated to successful case processing may be influenced. Neglecting to adequately investigate cases has been linked to cooperation withdrawal (O'Neal, 2017). Further complicating the relationship between officer perceptions and cooperation decisions, sexual assault victims may experience secondary victimization if police officers believe that only certain case characteristics are worthy of investigation (Patterson, 2011). Germane to the current discussion, secondary victimization can cause sexual assault victims to withdraw cooperation with law enforcement (Frohmann, 1998).

Cooperation with Prosecutors

Approximately 40-85% of adolescent sexual assault cases that are reported to law enforcement continue to the prosecution stage (Cross, Walsh, Simone, & Jones, 2003). On average, approximately one-third of adult sexual assault cases are referred to prosecution with half of adult cases being accepted by prosecution (Spohn et al., 2001).

This rate can be contextualized by pointing out that prosecution of sexual assault cases are seven times more likely when the victim cooperates (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001). This finding highlights the salient role victims play in the progression of sexual assault cases through the criminal justice system. Similar to the cooperation literature reviewed above regarding law enforcement, sexual assault victims encounter various factors that influence their cooperation with prosecution.

The likelihood of sexual assault victims' cooperating with prosecution are shaped by the presence (or absence) of certain victim and case characteristics. Research indicates that static factors like gender and age influence sexual assault victims' decision to cooperate with prosecution. Regarding gender, female sexual assault victims are more likely to support prosecution compared to male victims (McLeod, 1983). Regarding age, multiple studies have found inconsistent relationships between victim age and cooperation with prosecution (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh, 2004; McLeod, 1983). For example, McLeod (1983) found that younger sexual assault victims are more likely to cooperate with prosecution in early stages of case processing, with Kingsnorth & MacIntosh's (2004) study finding that older sexual assault victims are more likely to cooperate with prosecution. However, Dawson & Dinovitzer (2001) did not find a relationship between age and victim cooperation with prosecution.

In addition to demographic characteristics, case characteristics and case processing circumstances positively impact victim cooperation with prosecution. For example, cooperation is more likely when the sexual assault incident is more serious. As offense severity increases, victims are more likely to support prosecution of the perpetrator (Hirschel & Hutchison, 2003; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh, 2004; McLeod,

1983). Also related to case severity, cooperation has been found to be three times more likely when victims suffer injuries from the incident (McLeod, 1983; but also see Alderden & Long, 2016; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh, 2004). Whether the sexual assault mirrors stereotypical beliefs about rape also influences victim cooperation; victims' likelihood of cooperation with prosecution increases when they are perceived as a legitimate victim of "real rape" (Anders & Christopher, 2011). In addition to case characteristics, cooperation increases when victims have the opportunity to videotape their testimonies and schedule regular meetings with victim advocates (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001). Additionally, the presence of victim services increases the likelihood of victim cooperation (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh, 2004).

The paragraph above outlined factors that increase the likelihood of victim cooperation, however, there are factors that are negatively associated with victim cooperation. Indeed, certain victim characteristics decrease sexual assault victims' cooperation with prosecution (Alderden & Long, 2016; Bui, 2001; Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh, 2004; McLeod, 1983). African American sexual assault victims are less likely to support prosecuting the perpetrator due to their lack of trust in the criminal justice system (Kingsnorth & MacIntosh, 2004). Dawson and Dinovitzer (2001) suggest that financial instability and past negative experiences with the criminal justice system decreases victim cooperation with prosecution for African American victims. Additionally, engaging in risky behaviors at the time of the incident may decrease the likelihood of the victim cooperating with the criminal justice system (Kingsnorth & MacIntosh, 2004). This finding is particularly relevant to adolescent cases, as adolescents who participate in risky behavior (e.g., alcohol or drug consumption,

unconscious, walking alone at night) are less likely to cooperate with prosecution. This finding has been attributed to their fear of risky behaviors becoming known (Turner et al., 1998).

In addition to victim characteristics, certain case characteristics negatively influence victim cooperation. For example, as the relational proximity between the perpetrator and victim increases (acquaintance, relative, or intimate), cooperation with prosecution decreases (Alderden & Long, 2016; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh, 2004; McLeod, 1983). Victim cooperation with prosecution is less likely if the victim lives with the perpetrator (Bui, 2001; McLeod, 1983). Victims of sexual assault lacking character witnesses or witnesses to the crime to corroborate their testimony in their case may decrease cooperation with prosecution, because victims may fear prosecution will not perceive them as credible if they cannot produce witnesses (Alderden & Long, 2016).

Prior literature notes that victim cooperation is an essential factor impacting law enforcement and prosecution's decision making in sexual assault case processing (Kaiser et al., 2017; O'Neal, 2017). Therefore, understanding the decision to cooperate with the criminal justice system is imperative in order to assess other sexual assault case processing decision points. The following section addresses law enforcement practices of adolescent sexual assault cases. More specifically, the section examines law enforcement perceptions of adolescent sexual assault cases, as well as, how victim and case characteristics influence law enforcement arrest decision making.

Arrest Decisions in Sexual Assault Cases

Research confirms that attrition in sexual assault cases is common, with high attrition rates being concentrated within the law enforcement investigation stage of case

processing (Sleath & Bull, 2017). Specifically, attrition often occurs during the arrest phase, as less than one-third of sexual assault cases result in the arrest of suspects (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Planty et al., 2013). High attrition rates at the policing stage are problematic given the gatekeeping role law enforcement have in case processing. Overall, law enforcement officers decide whether or not to introduce the case into the criminal justice system.

Although, juvenile sexual assault cases tend to have slightly higher arrest rates (Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 2012), attrition is still high. Adolescent sexual assault cases are 7% more likely to result in arrest when compared to adult sexual assault cases (Snyder, 2000; also Finkelhor et al., 2001). Despite comparatively higher arrest rates, only 32% of adolescent cases will result in an arrest. Stated alternatively, the majority of adolescent sexual assault cases fail to result in the arrest of a perpetrator. Of cases resulting in arrest, less than half are cleared by law enforcement without arrest or prosecution (LaFree, 1981; Snyder, 2000). Thus, 55% of adolescent sexual assault cases do not result in a successful case outcome (Kerstetter, 1990; Snyder, 2000).

High attrition rates are coupled with low reporting rates, as adolescent victims are less likely to report their sexual victimization to law enforcement compared to adult victims (Finkelhor & Wolak, 2003; Finkelhor et al., 2001). Thus, when the prevalence of attrition is high during law enforcement decision making, it is problematic because it increases the invisibility of sexual assault (Himelein, Vogel, & Wachowiak, 1994). Police officers are often the first contact victims have with the criminal justice system; thus, if inappropriate treatment is present, it could jeopardize the trust between victims and the criminal justice system. Additionally, when victims do confide their sexual victimization

to law enforcement and are confronted with inappropriate treatment, they may perceive law enforcement as not seeing their case as a credible or them as a legitimate victim. Victims may withdrawal cooperation if they are perceived as an illegitimate victim, which will increase attrition rates.

In the sections that follow, the factors that influence attrition rates during the investigation stage are discussed, specifically focusing on the factors that influence the police's decision to arrest. Particularly, discussing police officer's attitudes and perceptions is important because their perceptions guide decision making on case progression (Parratt & Pina, 2017; Sleath & Bull, 2017). Additionally, focusing on the arrest decision stage is important because most scholarship focuses on arrest when quantifying law enforcement discretion (Schulenberg, 2015).

Police Attitudes and Perceptions

Law enforcement officers have a considerable amount of discretion during numerous decision points including selecting, investigating, and recommending charges in sexual assault cases (Page, 2008a). These decisions, like the victim's decision to cooperate, are shaped by many factors. Police officers' decision making is influenced by societal expectations, personal identity, and past experiences (Alderden & Ullman, 2012). Particularly, given the attrition that occurs at the investigation stage—and the known role attitudes and beliefs play in shaping decision making, it is important to understand how rape myths and victim blaming may guide officers' decision making in the context of sexual assault case processing

Rape myth acceptance. Rape myth acceptance refers to individuals who subscribe to beliefs that discredit victims and endow justifications of the perpetrators'

action. Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) describe rape myths as “attitudes and beliefs that are generally false yet widely and persistently held and that serve to deny and justify male aggression towards women” (p. 134). Rape myths include beliefs such as, “all women can be raped,” “women invite sexual violence by their clothing,” “going home with the perpetrator translates to consent,” “resistance is always a possibility,” “women lie about experiencing sexual victimization,” and “having a prior sexual relationship means sexual assault is not probable” (Page, 2007, 2008a; Sleath & Bull, 2012, p. 254-259). Past research suggests that higher levels of rape myth acceptance are associated with officers perceiving lower levels of victim credibility (Page, 2008a). And, research has established the connection between victim credibility and arrest decisions (Kaiser et al., 2017; O’Neal, 2017). However, studies examining rape myth acceptance among law enforcement officers is inconsistent as to whether police hold high or low levels of acceptance (Page, 2008a; Sleath & Bull, 2012).

As victim credibility is questioned, responsibility may decrease from the perpetrator and become displaced onto the victim (Goodman-Delahunty & Graham, 2011). Myths associated with displaced responsibility typically excuse the perpetrator’s behavior: “the sexual incident was driven by desire,” “the perpetrator was just sexually frustrated,” and “males get carried away” (Sleath & Bull, 2012, p. 254-259). According to Sleath and Bull’s (2012) study, three out of eight officers agreed the incident was driven by desire. Additionally, approximately one-fourth of the officers’ in this study excused the perpetrators’ behaviors, citing sexual frustration and getting carried away (Sleath & Bull, 2012). Excusing the perpetrator’s behavior may lead to law enforcement officers blaming the victim for their victimization.

Victim blaming. Some studies suggest that law enforcement officers blame victims for their sexual assault experiences (Goodman-Delahunty & Graham, 2011; Schuller & Stewart, 2000; Sleath & Bull, 2012; Wentz & Archbold, 2012). Blame is often fueled by victim behavior, relationship characteristics between the suspect and victim, and assault characteristics. For example, if the victim partakes in alcohol consumption, has a relationship with the perpetrator, or if the victim is perceived to be provocative, law enforcement officers are more likely to attribute increased culpability to the victim (Goodman-Delahunty & Graham, 2011; Schuller & Stewart, 2000; Sleath & Bull, 2012). Regarding the victim-suspect relationship, as the relational proximity between the victim and perpetrator increases, law enforcement's degree of victim blaming increases (Sleath & Bull, 2012). Stated differently, police ascribe blame to victims of acquaintance rape and intimate partner rape more than victims of stranger rape (Sleath & Bull, 2012).

It should be noted that prior literature exhibits a mixed conclusion on whether officer's gender influences victim blame. Schuller and Stewart (2000) indicate victim blaming differs between male and female law enforcement officers. Male law enforcement officers who adhere to rape myths at higher levels tend to increase their level of victim blaming. However, as rape myth acceptance decreases, female law enforcement officers tend to increase their level of victim blaming (Schuller & Stewart, 2000; Sleath & Bull, 2012). Nonetheless, other studies examining law enforcement's victim blaming did not find a gendered effect (Goodman-Delahunty & Graham, 2011; Wentz & Archbold, 2012).

Specialized Training. Due to the unique circumstances surrounding the investigation of sexual assault, law enforcement agencies have implemented training programs to better equip officers for the special environment surrounding this crime (Goodman-Delahunty & Graham, 2011; Menaker, Campbell, & King, 2017; Sleath & Bull, 2012). Despite specialized training, few studies have found a significant decrease in law enforcement's victim blaming when assessing pre- and post-test training targeting sexual assault investigations (Goodman-Delahunty & Graham, 2011; Sleath & Bull, 2012). However, one study found that an intensive training decreased victim blaming in cases involving weak evidence (Darkwinkel, Powell, & Tidmarsh, 2013). However, success of the training may be attributed to either the intensive 98-hour training program or the immediate post-test assessment of the treatment (Darkwinkel et al., 2013).

Law enforcement attitudes, specifically endorsing rape myths and victim blaming, often results in investigations and arrest of perpetrators in cases aligning with stereotypical sexual assault and rape cases. However, the subscriptions of rape myths and victim blaming are not the only factors that contribute to whether or not suspects are arrested in sexual assault cases. Indeed, extant research finds that legal and extra-legal factors influence decisions regarding arrest (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Bachmann, 1998; Campbell et al., 2015; LaFree, 1981; Spohn & Tellis, 2014).

Legal Factors

Arrest likelihood increases when legal factors are present in sexual assault cases. Legal factors pertain to evidentiary factors that are legally relevant to the case (Campbell et al., 2015). Legal factors include witness presence, victim resistance, cooperation of the victim, severity of the offense, and the suspect's use of a weapon (Alderden & Ullman,

2012a, 2012b; Bouffard, 2000; Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Kerstetter, 1990; LaFree, 1981, 1989; Spohn & Tellis, 2014). In the following paragraphs, legal factors that research suggests are pertinent to law enforcement decision making of sexual assault cases are highlighted.

Seriousness of the offense. Offense severity is one legal factor that influences whether or not an officer will arrest a suspect of sexual assault (Frazier & Haney, 1996; Spohn & Tellis, 2012; Tasca et al., 2013). Overall, offense severity relates to law enforcement's perception of harm inflicted from the offense. Offense severity indicators include use of force, victim injuries, and whether a weapon was used by the perpetrator (Du Mont et al., 2003; Frazier & Haney, 1996). Since physical injuries are perceived by officers to provide physical corroboration that a sexual assault occurred, law enforcement may rely on the presence of injuries as a way to confirm crime occurrence in addition to marking the severity of the offense (Bachman, 1998; Du Mont et al., 2003). However, it should be noted that relying on physical injuries may mislead law enforcement because not all sexual assaults leave behind physical marks (Bachman, 1998; Bouffard, 2000; Estrich, 1987). Therefore, extant case processing research often operationalizes presence of injury as a severity of offense indicator instead of an evidentiary strength indicator (Du Mont et al., 2003; Kerstetter, 1990; O'Neal, 2017; O'Neal et al., 2016).

Strength of evidence. Strength of evidence includes legal factors that strengthen the evidentiary environment surrounding a case. Relevant evidence includes physical evidence, suspect interviews, victim cooperation, witnesses to the crime, and prompt reporting of the incident by the victim (for review, see O'Neal et al., 2016). When a sexual assault case includes physical evidence, law enforcement can compare the

evidence with the victim's report. Evidentiary strength increases when physical evidence corroborates victim testimony (Frazier & Horney, 1996; Kerstetter, 1990). For example, medical exams increase evidentiary strength and case progression in general (Campbell, Patterson, Bybee, & Dworkin, 2009). Additionally, by participating in a forensic medical sexual assault exam, the victim's perceived cooperation increases (Bouffard, 2000; O'Neal et al., 2016). In addition to medical evidence, interviews and prompt reporting influence the strength of evidence (Campbell et al., 2015; LaFree, 1989; O'Neal et al., 2016; Wood et al., 2011). For example, acquiring an interview or confession from the suspect increases the likelihood of arrest as well as further case processing stages (Campbell et al., 2015; O'Neal et al., 2016). Prompt reporting is more likely to increase the prevalence of arrest in sexual assault cases (LaFree, 1989; Wood et al., 2011). Furthermore, if the victim does not report the victimization in a prompt manner, evidence and injuries are less likely to be present (Johnson & Peterson, 2008).

Extra-Legal Factors

Extra-legal factors are legally irrelevant to the case; however, research indicates that these factors may overshadow the influence of legal factors when police are deciding whether or not to arrest suspects in sexual assault cases (Alderden & Ullman, 2012). Extra-legal factors include whether the victim engaged in perceived risky behaviors (e.g., alcohol consumption), the relationship between the victim and suspect, the victim/suspect living arrangement, the race or ethnicity of the victim/suspect, detective gender, forensic examination refusal, the suspect's demeanor toward police, the suspect's alcohol and drug use, and the victim's preference (Alderden & Ullman, 2012b; Bouffard, 2000; Feder, 1998; LaFree, 1981; Lally & DeMaris, 2012; O'Neal et al., 2016).

Victim credibility. Victim credibility is one of the most salient extra-legal decision-making factors regarding sexual assault cases (Beichner & Spohn, 2005; Campbell et al., 2015; Frohman, 1991). Law enforcement officers work toward establishing victim credibility during sexual assault case processing. Because legal actors at later stages of case processing (prosecutors, jurors, and defense attorneys) consider victim credibility, law enforcement officers assess victim credibility when investigating sexual assault (Spohn & Tellis, 2014). Downstream orientation suggests that law enforcement officers will not arrest suspects in sexual assault cases where victim credibility is questioned because charging and conviction is unlikely (Campbell et al., 2015; Tasca et al., 2013).

Multiple factors inform law enforcement officers' decision to question a victim's credibility. Some of the factors pertain to risky behaviors, moral character, emotional expression, reporting consistency, victim cooperation, and "real rape" characteristics (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Bouffard, 2000; Campbell et al., 2015; Estrich, 1987; Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990; LaFree, 1980, 1981; Tasca et al., 2013). In the sections below, specific factors that influence police officer victim credibility assessments are discussed.

Risky Behaviors. Law enforcement officers consider "risky behaviors" as one of the decision-making factors that constitutes victim credibility (Campbell et al., 2015; O'Neal, 2017). Risky behaviors include drinking alcohol or consuming drugs prior to or during the incident, criminal history, prostitution, being unconscious, and walking alone at night (Campbell et al., 2015; Schuller & Stewart, 2000; Sheehy, 2000; Tasca et al., 2013). Campbell and colleagues (2015) found that few law enforcement officers viewed

intoxication as an evaluation risk towards the juvenile victim's credibility when comparing to adult sexual assault victims. Their study found that 45% of law enforcement officers did not use intoxication as a factor for victim credibility; however, in their study, some investigators state intoxication during the incident can be used as a bargaining tool to obtain confessions from suspects (Campbell et al., 2015). However, prior studies indicate that females who are unconscious due to alcohol use are viewed as precipitating the sexual assault (Schuller & Stewart, 2000; Sheehy, 2000). One study found that as victim alcohol consumption increases, officers perceive the victim as less credible; conversely, in this study, the officers' perception of the perpetrator remains consistent regardless of the perpetrator's increased alcohol consumption (Schuller & Stewart, 2000). In general, sexual assault cases involving adults indicate that having a history of drug use or prostitution damages victim credibility (Tasca et al., 2013); however, another study notes that prostitution is not a decision-making factor for adolescent sexual assault cases (Campbell et al., 2015). Furthermore, Hicks and Tite's (1998) work indicates that a history of drug abuse is not as salient in adolescent sexual assault cases. These findings indicate that certain risk-taking behaviors are not as applicable to adolescent victims' credibility as risk-taking behaviors are in adult samples due to young victims being perceived as innocent when engaging in certain risk-taking behaviors.

Moral character. Moral character encompasses the perception of the victim's reputation. Law enforcement officers evaluate the victim's reputation from the perceptions of individuals close to the victim, interviewing the victim, and assessing past records (Campbell et al., 2015; LaFree, 1981). Law enforcement officers conduct

interviews with teachers, friends, and family members to aid in their evaluation of the victim's reputation (Campbell et al., 2015). Officers ask questions regarding sexual activity, performance in school, and whether the victim has a history of lying (Campbell et al., 2015). Moreover, some investigators believe that having a history of sexual intercourse increases the risk of false reporting (Campbell et al., 2015).

Emotional Expression. When evaluating victim credibility, officers consider whether the victim expressed emotion (Spohn & Tellis, 2014). Some officers believe that victims need to be composed (Campbell et al., 2015); whereas, other studies indicate officers perceive victims as more credible when expressing more emotion (Campbell et al., 2015; Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990). Investigators contend that emotional expression is a fine line (Spohn & Tellis, 2014). Victims must express the correct amount of emotion. "True victims" are more likely to showcase a flat affect (Spohn & Tellis, 2014); however, victims that are characterized as dramatic are more likely to be perceived as lying about the incident (Campbell et al., 2015).

Reporting Consistency. Some investigators believe that victim credibility can be assessed through the consistency of reporting (Campbell et al., 2015; Spohn & Tellis, 2014). The amount of inconsistent narration regarding what occurred before, during, and after the incident influences the victim's credibility. A few inconsistent statements are appropriate; however, as inconsistent statements escalate, law enforcement are more likely to perceive the victim as culpable (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Campbell et al., 2015). Additionally, if the victim is detailed with their disclosure to law enforcement, officers are more likely to perceive the victim as credible (Campbell et al., 2015; Tasca et al., 2013).

Victim Cooperation. Past research indicates that victim cooperation impacts the progression of sexual assault cases in the criminal justice system (Alderden & Ullman, 2012). The odds of an arrest decrease drastically (88%) when victims are unwilling to cooperate with law enforcement (Alderden & Ullman, 2012). Sexual assault cases are dependent on victim cooperation because of the unique circumstances surrounding the incident. Usually, witnesses are not present and evidence is supplied by the victim (Bouffard, 2000). Therefore, law enforcement may perceive the victim as less credible if they are unwilling to cooperate with the investigation (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Tasca et al., 2013). According to Spohn and Tellis' (2014) research, some law enforcement officers try to understand that the process of reporting and actively cooperating with the system is difficult for sexual assault victims. Victims may withdraw cooperation due to the length of the investigation, fear of retaliation, or due to the relationship between the victim and perpetrator (Spohn & Tellis, 2014).

Law enforcement's perception of victim cooperation can encompass prompt reporting and participating in a medical exam. For example, rates of arrest increase when victims promptly reported their incident to law enforcement (LaFree, 1981). However, Tasca and colleagues (2013) found that increases in arrest due to prompt reporting are neutralized when law enforcement officers are able to collect evidence from the victim. Additionally, research finds that the probability of arrest increases when victims participate in a forensic sexual assault exam (Bouffard, 2000). By agreeing to a forensic sexual assault exam, law enforcement officers perceive the victim as demonstrating their willingness to cooperate.

“Real rape” characteristics. Sleath and Bull (2017) argue that the credibility of the victim is often assessed based on factors pertaining to “real rape” characteristics. Real rape includes incidents where evidence is collected that supports that the victim resisted the perpetrator, the victim did not engage in alcohol consumption, the sexual incident was committed by a stranger, the perpetrator threatened the victim, and a weapon was used (Estrich, 1987; O’Neal, 2017). Despite law enforcement’s reliance on “real rape” characteristics, this type of sexual assault is not the norm among cases. According to Planty and colleagues’ (2016) study, only 10% of sexual assault cases involved a weapon (also see: Bouffard, 2000). Additionally, over three-fourths of victims know their perpetrator (Planty, Langton, Krebs, Berzofsky, & Smiley-McDonald, 2016).

Race and ethnicity. Research suggests that the race of the victim and suspect influence some law enforcement officers’ decision to arrest. Additionally, scholars suggest that the suspect/victim racial/ethnic dyad can influence arrest decisions (Tellis & Spohn, 2008). Black and Latino/a perpetrators and victims are seen as disrupting perceived social norms more than white perpetrators and victims. The severity of punishment increases when minority individuals are seen as the perpetrator (Spohn & Tellis, 2008). Additionally, the sexual victimization of a minority victim is perceived as less serious than white victims (O’Neal et al., 2016). However, other studies cite that race does not affect law enforcement’s decision to arrest (LaFree, 1981). Bryden and Lengnick (1997) suggest that law enforcement officers are less likely to progress sexual assault cases if the victim identifies with a minority group (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; O’Neal et al., 2016; Tasca et al., 2013). Horney and Spohn (1996) found that African American perpetrators were more likely to be identified by law enforcement but not

arrested. However, some research indicates it is the suspect/victim racial/ethnic dyad of sexual assault case incidents, mainly having a white victim and a minority perpetrator, that increases arrest probability (LaFree, 1980).

Suspect and victim relationship. The relationship between the suspect and victim impacts law enforcement investigation; however, the extent of the relationship effect is inconsistent among studies. Research indicates that the relationship between the victim and perpetrator influences different aspects of law enforcement decision making. In cases where the perpetrator is an acquaintance or has a more intimate relationship with the victim, the chances of law enforcement identifying the perpetrator increases (Horney & Spohn, 1996; Tasca et al., 2013). Nonetheless, prior literature indicates conflicting findings on whether relationships influence arrest. Some studies found an association between having a known perpetrator and having an increased likelihood of arrest (Bachman, 1998; Bouffard, 2000; LaFree 1981). The arrest effect found for prior acquaintances or intimate relationships may be attributed to the fact that law enforcement officers spend less resources investigating possible perpetrators due to the suspect being known to the victim (LaFree, 1981). However, other studies indicate that the victim-offender relationship does not impact the likelihood of arrest (Horney & Spohn, 1996). Some studies find that sexual assault cases involving strangers have an increased likelihood of arrest (Bachman, 1998; Bouffard, 2000; Tasca et al., 2013). This finding may be attributed to victim cooperation and evidence collection. Victims are less likely to cooperate and evidence collection decreases when the perpetrator is known by the victim due to fear of retaliation; thus, law enforcement may have more difficulty in arresting the perpetrator (Bouffard, 2000; Burgess & Holmstrom, 1978; Spohn & Tellis, 2014).

The law enforcement arrest decision is a pivotal stage within sexual assault case processing. Of the one-third of sexual assault cases clearing the arrest stage, prosecutor's decision making must consider which cases warrant prosecution. Therefore, the factors police officers perceive as salient for arrest influence later case processing stages. Law enforcement officers' establishment of key factors in adolescent sexual assault cases infiltrates how prosecution interprets the sexual assault case, suspect, and victim (Spohn & Tellis, 2010; Tasca et al., 2013). Prosecutors in turn use this establishment of factors to decide court outcomes for the adolescent sexual assault case. In the following section, the initial charge filing decision characteristics for prosecutors are discussed. More specifically, the next section examines the legally relevant and irrelevant factors that prosecutors consider when filing charges in adolescent sexual assault cases.

Initial Charge Filing Decisions in Sexual Assault Cases

Prosecutor's decision making in sexual assault cases also impacts sexual assault case progression. For law enforcement, attrition rates for sexual assaults are mainly concentrated in the decision to arrest. However, for prosecution, attrition rates are influenced by prosecutor's decision to file charges (Albonetti, 1987; Beichner & Spohn, 2005). Cases involving uncertainty of conviction are considered red flags. Prosecution, therefore, may reject cases they perceive as unlikely to lead to conviction (Beichner & Spohn, 2005). Of the adolescent sexual assault cases cleared by law enforcement, 40-50% are presented to prosecution for filing consideration (Cross et al., 2003). In general, prosecutors file charges on 50-60% of sexual assault cases (Chandler & Torney, 1981; LaFree, 1981; Beichner & Spohn, 2005). Therefore, only half of the cases presented to prosecution result in charges being filed. It should be noted that one study found that

almost two-thirds of adolescent sexual assault cases referred to prosecution resulted in the filing of charges (Walsh, Jones, Cross, & Lippert, 2010). Walsh and colleagues' (2010) study indicates that adolescent sexual assault cases were more apt to involve more than one form of evidence because adolescent victims are more likely to disclose their victimization when compared to child victimization cases. Consequently, disclosing the incident provides law enforcement officers with more information to investigate (Walsh et al., 2010). Additionally, Hicks and Tite (1998) contend that criminal justice actors tend to perceive adolescents as more credible.

Law enforcement officers are not the only criminal justice actors that exercise discretion. Indeed, prosecutors use discretion when deciding to charge suspects. Unlike with law enforcement officers, discretion allotted to prosecutors remains overwhelmingly unchecked (Butler, 2010; Neubauer, 1973). Butler (2010) characterizes prosecutorial discretion as lacking regulation – prosecution can exercise discretion without impediments from judges or politicians. Therefore, the decision to file charges are ultimately based on prosecutors' discretion regarding which cases are seen as chargeable. As a result, sexual assault case advancement to the court is either hindered or facilitated by the discretion of prosecution (Alderden & Ullman, 2012).

Prosecutorial discretion regarding sexual assault cases is influenced by the prosecution's need to eliminate cases likely to receive an acquittal (Frohmann, 1991; Spohn et al., 2001). Sexual assault cases that are not perceived as convictable are likely to be dropped from case progression. Therefore, sexual assault cases are more likely to be accepted by prosecution if they align with the prosecutor's perception of convictability. Aligning with the prosecutor's perception of convictability may encompass strong

physical evidence against the suspect with little to no evidence portraying the victim as uncertain (Spohn et al., 2001).

Like police officers, prosecution considers legally relevant and legally irrelevant factors when deciding whether or not to file an initial charge in sexual assault cases (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Beichner & Spohn, 2012; Campbell, Greeson, Bybee, & Fehler-Cabral, 2012; Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990; Spohn & Holleran, 2001).

Mirroring the legal factors that law enforcement considers when deciding to arrest, the legally relevant factors prosecutors consider include the strength of evidence, corroborating witnesses, prompt reporting, and the offender confession (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Beichner & Spohn, 2005, 2012; Campbell et al., 2012; Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh, & Wentworth, 1999; Spohn & Holleran, 2001). Extra-legal factors include risk-taking behaviors, moral character, victim credibility, the relationship between the victim and suspect, and the location of the sexual assault incident (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Beichner & Spohn, 2005, 2012; Campbell et al., 2012; Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990; Spohn & Holleran, 2001). The influence of legal and extra-legal factors is determined by the prosecutor's perception of convictability (Frohmann, 1991).

Prosecution's concentration on convictability has prompted researchers to understand prosecutors' decision making regarding anticipated repercussions from the defense, judge, and jurors regarding the sexual assault case (Frohmann, 1991, 1997). Overall, prosecution's decision to charge may be influenced by their perception of how the jury and defense may view the victim, suspect, or the evidence brought forward in the case (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Campbell et al., 2012; Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990;

Kingsnorth et al., 1999; Walsh et al., 2010). Consequently, prosecution may disregard sexual assault cases that will not be successful in court – resulting in initial charges not being filed (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Beichner & Spohn, 2005, 2012; Spohn & Holleran, 2001). Since prosecution considers the downstream actors and their perceptions of weak factors, prosecution may be more apt to rely on strong extra-legal factors instead of weak legal factors when deciding to file charges (Beichner & Spohn, 2005).

Legal Factors

The presence of legal elements increases the likelihood of charges being filed. In other words, prosecution is more likely to file charges when cases involve factors such as strong evidence to support the victim statement, the offense is deemed serious, and the suspect is culpable (Kingsnorth et al., 1999; Spohn & Holleran, 2001; Kingsnorth et al., 1999; Walsh et al., 2010). Research indicates that if the offense is deemed serious and corroborating evidence is strong, filing of charges increases (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Beichner & Spohn, 2005, 2012; Spohn & Holleran, 2001; Walsh et al., 2010). In the sections below, the legal factors found to influence prosecutorial decision making in sexual assault cases are discussed.

Strength of Evidence. Evidentiary strength is conceptualized as the components of a case that may or may not support the occurrence of the sexual assault incident. Strength of evidence includes prompt reporting of the sexual victimization, corroborating testimonies, deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), and corroborating witnesses (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Campbell et al., 2012; Kingsnorth et al., 1999; Myers, 2005; Walsh et al., 2010; Wood et al., 2011). When evidentiary strength is lacking, prosecution and later court decision makers may feel compelled to rely on extra-legal factors (Estrich, 1987);

therefore, ascertaining corroborating evidence may increase decision making using legally relevant factors over decision making relying on extra-legal factors (Spears & Spohn, 1997).

Adolescent sexual victimization usually occurs in the private sphere with limited corroborating witnesses; therefore, the victim's testimony is often the primary source of information regarding the incident (Walsh et al., 2010). Because of the heavy reliance on the victim's testimony, characteristics of victim reporting are often considered when making charging decisions. For example, according to Beichner and Spohn (2005, 2012), prompt reporting increases the likelihood of charging for prosecutors in Miami. Additionally, prompt reporting of the incident increases the perception of the victim's credibility (Anderson, 2004). Thus, delayed reporting may increase the prosecution's uncertainty of the victim's motivation (Frohmann, 1991; Kingsnorth et al., 1999; Wood et al., 2011).

In addition to prompt reporting, victims who provide consistent accounts increase the credibility of their testimony (Spohn et al., 2001). Adult samples generally show that inconsistent testimony decreases the likelihood of charges by 90% (Alderden & Ullman, 2012). The reliance on consistent testimony may be due to the fact that the validity of the adolescent's testimony is challenging to ascertain. For example, the adolescent sexual assault victim's testimony may be affected by their development and understanding of sexual abuse (Lippert, Cross, Jones, Walsh, 2009). For this reason, corroborating evidence may manifest as unusual sexual behaviors or psychological stress (Myers, 2005). In order to strengthen the adolescent victim's testimony, prosecutors should incorporate the unique corroborating evidence of adolescent sexual assault (Walsh et al.,

2010). Additionally, using videotaped testimony can increase victim cooperation (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001); thus, increasing the likelihood of charges filed.

Campbell, Greeson, Bybee, and Fehler-Cabral (2012) found that prosecution was five times more likely when DNA evidence was present in adolescent sexual assault cases. First, DNA evidence corroborating the victim's testimony increases the credibility of the victim (Beichner & Spohn, 2005, 2012; Walsh et al., 2010). Second, acquiring physical evidence allows for the prosecution to rely on evidence instead of the victim's testimony (Lipovsky, 1994).

In addition to prompt, consistent testimony and DNA evidence, cases involving a corroborating witness increases the probability of charges being filed in sexual assault cases (Kingsnorth et al., 1999; Walsh et al., 2010). According to Walsh and colleagues (2010), having a witness support the testimony of the victim is the strongest predictor of charges being filed. Similarly, Kingsnorth and colleagues (1999) found that corroborating witnesses were significant when looking at both stranger and non-stranger sexual assault cases.

Seriousness of the offense. Offense seriousness has been conceptualized as the severity of injuries the victim obtained and the suspect's use of a weapon (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Beichner & Spohn, 2005, 2012; Spohn & Holleran, 2001). As injury severity increases, prosecution is more likely to file charges (Beichner & Spohn, 2012). Additionally, if the suspect threatened the victim with a knife or gun, charges are more likely to be filed by prosecution (Beichner & Spohn, 2012). For example, Spohn and Holleran (2001) found that stranger cases were five times more likely to move forward when the case involved a weapon. Regarding injury, if severe victim injuries were

present in sexual assault cases committed by non-strangers, prosecution's likelihood of charging the suspect increased (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Kingsnorth et al., 1999, Spohn & Holleran, 2001).

Victim cooperation. Sexual assault cases that have a cooperative victim are more likely to have charges filed (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Kingsnorth et al., 1999; Spohn et al., 2001; Wood et al., 2011). Wood and colleagues (2011) found that having a cooperative victim increases the likelihood of charging by three times. According to Dawson and Dinovitzer (2001), the rate of charges being filed increased by seven times when the victim cooperated. The reliance on victim cooperation may be due to the fact that prosecution perceives the case as more convictable.

Extra-legal Factors

Due to prosecution's focus on avoiding uncertainty and potential acquittal, research finds that prosecution considers extra-legal factors when deciding to file charges. Extra-legal factors include the moral character of the victim, the victim's risky behaviors, the relationship between the offender and victim, and the victim's credibility (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Beichner & Spohn, 2005, 2012; Campbell et al., 2012; Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990; Spohn & Holleran, 2001). Extra-legal factors pertain to incident characteristics that are not deemed legally relevant to the case (Spears & Spohn, 1997).

Victim and offender relationship. Prosecutors sometimes consider the victim-suspect relationship when deciding to file initial charges. For example, sexual assault cases involving a stranger are more likely to result in charging (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Beichner & Spohn, 2005). Conversely, other research studies have found that

sexual assault cases involving relatives have an increased likelihood of charges being filed (Beichner & Spohn, 2012; Campbell et al., 2012). The reliance on the victim-suspect relationship is complicated by the fact that prosecution can be apprehensive of sexual assault cases involving non-strangers because they fear the victim's cooperation may diminish (Alderden & Ullman, 2012). The victim-suspect relationship is also related to victim credibility. For example, Beichner and Spohn (2012) argue that in cases where prosecution doubts the victim's credibility, the prosecution's uncertainty was mitigated if the incident was perpetrated by a stranger. Finally, Campbell and colleagues (2012) found that adolescent sexual assault cases involving strangers were less likely to prompt prosecution to file charges. Indeed, adolescent cases involving relatives, intimates, and acquaintances were more likely to have charges filed (Campbell et al., 2012).

Moral character. Research indicates that questions regarding the victim's moral character decreases the likelihood of charges being filed (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Beichner & Spohn, 2005; Spohn & Holleran, 2001). Moral character pertains to the perceived reputation of the victim and questionable characteristics include prior history of drug abuse, prior criminal record, and being perceived as promiscuous (Alderden & Ullman, 2012). Specifically, sexual assault cases where evidence is lacking and the victim's moral character is questioned decreases the likelihood of charges being filed (Beichner & Spohn, 2005). Moreover, in cases involving acquaintances or relatives, charge likelihood decreased by 38% when the victim's moral character was questioned; whereas, cases involving intimate partners decreased by 22% when the victim's moral character was questioned (Beichner & Spohn, 2005). According to Beichner and Spohn (2005), the coupling of questionable character and weak evidence decreased the

likelihood of charges filed in stranger sexual assault cases less than cases involving known suspects. They contend that discrepancies between cases with known and unknown suspects occur because cases involving known perpetrators must untangle consent (Beichner & Spohn, 2005). Beichner and Spohn (2012) found that if the victim had a prior criminal record, the likelihood of charges being filed decreased; however, other factors such as a history of drug use or alcohol consumption did not influence charging decisions. Regarding research more specific to adolescents, Spears and Spohn (1997) included a mixed sample of adolescents and adults – they found that prosecution was more likely to file charges in cases where the victim’s moral character was not threatened.

Risky behaviors. Risk-taking behaviors pertain to victim behaviors that criminal justice actors perceive as risky; however, these behaviors may not be inherently risky (LaFree, 1989). Risk-taking behaviors are perceived as risky because criminal justice actors view the behaviors as not aligning with “real rape;” therefore, these behaviors are seen as precipitating the incident (LaFree, 1989). Risk-taking behaviors include the victim engaging in alcohol consumption, using illegal drugs, accompanying the suspect to their residence, inviting the suspect to the victim’s residence, and walking home alone at night (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Beichner & Spohn, 2005, 2012; Spohn & Holleran, 2001). Victim risk-taking behavior typically decreases the likelihood of charges being filed (Beichner & Spohn, 2005, 2012; Campbell et al., 2012; Spears & Spohn, 1997). For example, Beichner and Spohn (2012) found that cases where victims invited the suspect to their residence diminished the likelihood of prosecution filing charges. This is because the victim’s credibility may be questioned due to perceptions of precipitation when the

victim invites the suspect to their residence (Beichner & Spohn, 2005). Additionally, victim alcohol consumption decreased the rate of charges filed (Beichner & Spohn, 2012). Conversely, and specific to adolescent cases, Campbell and colleagues (2012) found that alcohol or drug consumption does not influence prosecutorial charge decisions in adolescent sexual assault cases. Overall, sexual assault cases where victims do not engage in risk-taking behaviors have an increased likelihood of charging in both adolescent and adult samples (Spears & Spohn, 1997). Risk-taking is especially salient for sexual assault case processing because a 2005 study found that the presence of risk-taking behaviors may overshadow the evidentiary strength of the sexual assault case (Beichner & Spohn, 2005).

In conclusion, despite the increased assessment of sexual assault case processing through law enforcement attitudes and perceptions and the discretion of prosecutors, limited research has examined adolescent sexual assault case processing (Campbell et al., 2015; Parkinson, Shrimpton, Swanston, O'Tootle, & Oates, 2002; Spears & Spohn, 1997). The prevalence of adolescent sexual assault is pervasive within our society, and adolescent sexual assault cases encounter decision making barriers via cooperation, arrest, and initial filing of charges (Campbell et al., 2015; Daly & Bouhours, 2010; Parkinson et al., 2002; Snyder, 2000). There is a lack of research focusing on decision making during the sexual assault case processing stages of adolescent victim cooperation, police arrest, and prosecution's filing of initial charges. The present study examines this limited area of research by addressing these case processing decision points for adolescent sexual assault cases.

This study contributes to sexual assault case processing by applying a case processing framework to the examination of adolescent sexual assault case processing decision makers. The decisions of adolescent victims, law enforcement officers, and prosecution shape the trajectory of adolescent sexual assault cases in the criminal justice system. Thus, each actor's decision making contributions influence the next decision-making stage. Overall, examining these decision points of adolescent sexual assault case processing will enhance adolescent sexual assault case processing and bridge the gaps previously discussed.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Current Study

Numerous theoretical and empirical advances have been made in sexual assault case processing research; however, inquiries into the decision-making factors involved in adolescent sexual assault case processing remain limited. Indeed, extant literature that examines adolescent sexual assault case processing has produced mixed findings, resulting in unanswered questions. Therefore, this thesis seeks to further examine the decision-making factors in cases involving adolescent complainants. This study aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What factors influence adolescent victims' decision to cooperate with law enforcement?**
- 2) What factors influence the police's decision to arrest suspects in adolescent sexual assault cases?**
- 3) What factors influence prosecutor's decision to file an initial charge in adolescent sexual assault cases?**

Relying on previous case processing research, the current thesis aims to explain salient case processing decision points (e.g., victim cooperation, arrest, initial charge filing) in adolescent sexual assault cases. The following sections discuss the data and measures used to examine the research questions.

Data

This study uses secondary data obtained from sexual assault cases involving juvenile complainants. The data were originally collected for a large-scale study of sexual

assault policing and prosecuting in Los Angeles County (see Spohn & Tellis, 2012).

Spohn and Tellis (2012) collected sexual assault case files involving female complainants over the age of 12 that were reported to the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the Los Angeles County Sheriff Department (LASD) in 2008. All sexual assault cases reported to the LASD in 2008 were collected. Due to the numerous cases reported to the LAPD, the cases were stratified by division, and then by case clearance (cleared by arrest, cleared by exceptional means, investigation continuing, and unfounded; $N = 401$).⁴ Case files were originally coded for 350 variables based on readings of the case narratives. Female complainants were interviewed by police personnel using structured report documents; however, each interview was distinct in the type of information provided. The data were coded by examining the narrative reports and identifying themes. The case files have been de-identified to protect the privacy of those involved. Data were obtained directly from the original researchers.

The original sample includes 944 sexual assault cases involving female respondents age 12 or older. Of the 944 female respondents, 289 female respondents were between the age of 12 and 17. Therefore, 31.2% of the original sample constitutes adolescent victims of sexual assault. Twelve-year-olds constituted 4.5% of the adolescent sample; 13-year-olds composed 9% of the study's sample; 14-year-olds constituted 11.8% of the adolescent sample. The majority of the adolescent sexual assault victims were between the ages of 15 and 17. Adolescent victims at age 15 composed 24.9% of the study's sample; 16-year-olds constitute 25.3% of the adolescent sample; 17-year-olds encompass 24.6% of the study's sample.

⁴ Six cases were selected from each case clearance of the 19 divisions. Due to the lack of adequate cases for each case clearance, the final sample was composed of 401 cases (Spohn & Tellis, 2012).

Dependent Variables

The purpose of this thesis is to assess the factors that influence adolescent sexual assault case processing; to accomplish this research goal, this study examines three case processing stages. Specifically, this study aims to examine the decision-making factors that shape victim cooperation, arrest, and prosecutorial initial charging decisions.

Accordingly, the dependent variables were dichotomously coded and measured if the adolescent sexual assault case files indicated that the victim cooperated (yes = 1, no = 0), if law enforcement arrested the suspect (yes = 1, no = 0), and if prosecution filed initial charges (yes = 1, no = 0). Although cooperation was recorded for three decision stages (at time of reporting, during investigation, and after arrest), this thesis examines victim cooperation during the investigation stage. The majority of adolescent victims cooperated with law enforcement during the reporting stage; therefore, examining this stage will not provide notable implications for adolescent cooperation (O'Neal, 2017). Furthermore, examining the arrest stage decreases the sample size drastically due to the need for an arrest to occur in order for cooperation to be noted (O'Neal, 2017). Prior literature suggests that established victim cooperation increases the likelihood of arrest; therefore, examining victim cooperation during the investigation stage is pertinent (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001). In the cases where the suspect was identified (n = 225), arrest occurred in 112 adolescent sexual assault cases; therefore, 54.6% of the adolescent sexual assault cases with an identified suspect resulted in an arrest. In the cases where the sexual assault was referred to prosecution (n = 159), initial charges were filed in 79 cases; therefore, 52.0% of the adolescent sexual assault cases where the cases were referred resulted in

initial charges being filed. The descriptive statistics of the dependent variables are demonstrated in Tables 5, 6, and 7.

Independent Variables

The independent variables examined in this study are grouped according to the research question. Some variables are included in multiple models because past research has confirmed their importance for more than one case processing stage. For example, victim risk-taking behavior is salient for examining cooperation, arrest, and initial charge filing. Additionally, victim cooperation is the dependent variable for the first model; however, prior literature indicates that victim cooperation influences later case processing stages (Kaiser et al., 2017; Spohn & Tellis, 2014). Therefore, victim cooperation is included as an independent variable in the arrest and initial charge filing models.

Victim cooperation independent variables. The cooperation model includes theoretically relevant variables identified in prior case processing literature. Additionally, adolescent sexual assault cases differ contextually from adult sexual assault cases; therefore, one age-specific indicator is included. Overall, one variable is adolescent sexual assault case-specific and the subsequent variables are relevant to sexual assault cases generally.

Adolescent specific variable. Parent/caregiver reported to law enforcement was measured to examine whether or not the parental/caregiving figure reported the sexual assault incident to law enforcement. Therefore, cases where a parental/caregiver figure reported the incident to the police are coded as 1 (parent/caregiver reported incident to police = 1, parent/caregiver did not report incident to police = 0).

Strength of evidence. Number of physical evidence collected is a continuous measure that refers to whether multiple types of physical evidence was obtained (*Mean* = 0.98, ranges 0 to 6; Kaiser et al., 2017; O’Neal, 2017). Physical evidence includes the presence of fingerprints, whether the victim underwent a SART exam, and the presence of bloodstains, hair, skin, clothing or bedding, and semen. Prompt reporting was included and indicates whether the victim reported within an hour of the incident (victim reported in a prompt manner = 1, victim did not report in a prompt manner = 0; Kaiser et al., 2017). The cooperation model includes a continuous measure of the number of witnesses to the offense (*Mean* = 1.08; ranges from 0 to 11; Kaiser et al., 2017).

Victim credibility factors. The victim’s credibility was coded dichotomously based on whether or not the case files indicated that law enforcement questioned the victim’s credibility (officer questioned credibility = 1, officer did not question credibility = 0; O’Neal, 2017). Inconsistent victim testimony was coded dichotomously based on whether law enforcement officers indicated that the victim’s testimony was inconsistent (victim’s testimony was inconsistent = 1, victim’s testimony was not inconsistent; O’Neal, 2017). An exploratory factor analysis using principle axis factoring indicated that there was one underlying construct that hung together involving three measures for risk-taking behaviors: victim consumed alcohol prior to the incident, victim was drunk during the incident, and the victim was unconscious. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (0.69; Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996) and the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity ($X^2 [45] = 782.08, p < .001$) suggested that an exploratory factor analysis was appropriate to examine the risk-taking measures (see appendix). Risk-taking behaviors are included as a continuous measure, which encompasses whether the victim consumed

alcohol prior to the incident, whether the victim was drunk during the incident, and whether the victim was unconscious (Mean = 0.44, ranges 0 to 3, $\alpha = 0.89$; (Campbell et al., 2015; O’Neal, 2017)). Whether or not the victim resisted the incident is dichotomously coded (victim physically and/or verbally resisted sexual assault = 1, victim did not physically and/or verbally resist sexual assault = 0; Kaiser et al., 2017; Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990).

Suspect-victim relationship. The suspect-victim relationship is included and dummy coded in the model, which includes stranger, acquaintance, intimate, and relative. However, for this thesis, the suspect-victim relationship is dichotomously coded as non-stranger and stranger (suspect is a non-stranger = 1, with stranger as the reference category; Campbell et al., 2015).

Demographic and agency characteristics. Age of the victim is a continuous measure (Mean = 15.27, ranges 12 to 17); age of the suspect is a continuous measure (Mean = 27.19, ranges 11 to 74). Victim and suspect identifying as a minority race was dichotomously coded (victim/suspect identified as a minority race = 1, victim/suspect did not identify as a minority race = 0; O’Neal, 2017). The law enforcement agency indicates whether the adolescent sexual assault case was reported to the Los Angeles Police Department or the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LAPD = 1, LASD = 0; O’Neal, 2017).

Table 1

Coding Scheme for Victim Cooperation.

Dependent variable	
Victim Cooperation	Yes = 1, No = 0
Independent variables	
<i>Adolescent case factors</i>	
Parent/caregiver reported incident to law enforcement	Yes = 1, No = 0
<i>Strength of evidence</i>	
Physical evidence collected	Number of physical evidence types
Prompt reporting	Yes = 1, No = 0
Number of witnesses	Number of witnesses
<i>Victim credibility factors</i>	
Victim credibility question by officer	Yes = 1, No = 0
Inconsistent victim testimony	Yes = 1, No = 0
Number of risk-taking behaviors	Number of risk-taking behaviors
Resistance to the incident	Yes = 1, No = 0
<i>Suspect-victim relationship</i>	
Non-stranger	Yes = 1, No = 0
<i>Demographic and agency characteristics</i>	
Victim age	In years
Suspect age	In years
Victim minority race	Yes = 1, No = 0
Suspect minority race	Yes = 1, No = 0
LAPD	Yes = 1, No = 0

Arrest and initial charge filing independent variables. The arrest and initial charge filing models include factors regarding the victim's willingness to cooperate, case seriousness, strength of evidence, victim credibility, the suspect-victim relationship, and demographic and agency characteristics.

Willingness to cooperate. Willingness to cooperate encompasses three measures regarding victim cooperation, victim interviews, and parental/caregiver reporting. Victim cooperation is dichotomously coded where 1 indicates the victim cooperated at the time of the investigation (the victim cooperated at the time of the investigation = 1, the victim did not cooperate at the time of the investigation = 0; Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Tasca et al., 2013). The number of victim interviews is a continuous measure indicating the amount of interviews the victim participated in (arrest model *Mean* = 2.13 and initial

charge filing model *Mean* = 2.22, ranges 1 to 5; O’Neal, 2017). Parent/caregiver reported the incident to law enforcement is dichotomous and indicates whether parents/caregivers reported the sexual assault incident to law enforcement (parent/caregiver reported the incident to law enforcement = 1, parent/caregiver did not report the sexual assault incident to law enforcement = 0).

Case seriousness. Case seriousness refers to the two measures that relate to the perception that a sexual assault case is serious. Aggravated rape is a dichotomous measure and includes whether the sexual assault incident was regarded as an aggravated rape case (the incident aligned with aggravated rape = 1, the incident did not align with aggravated rape = 0; O’Neal, 2017). Suspect threatened the victim is a count measure, which indicates whether the victim was threatened with a single type of threat, two different types of threats, or not threatened by any type of threat (arrest model *Mean* = 0.40 and initial charge filing model *Mean* = 0.39, ranges 0 to 2).⁵

Strength of evidence. Evidentiary strength includes two measures. Physical evidence collected is a continuous measure that indicates whether cases include multiple forms of physical evidence (arrest model *Mean* = 1.06 and initial charge filing model *Mean* = 1.20, ranges 0 to 6). Physical evidence includes the presence of fingerprints, whether the victim underwent a SART exam, and the presence of bloodstains, hair, skin, clothing or bedding, and semen (Kaiser et al., 2017; O’Neal, 2017). Prompt reporting indicates whether the victim reported the incident within one hour of the act (victim

⁵ This measure includes three types of threats: (1) whether the suspect verbally threatened the victim, (2) whether the suspect threatened the victim with a weapon, and (3) whether the suspect threatened to harm the victim or someone else (Spohn & Tellis, 2012). For this thesis, this measure was collapsed into a count measure indicating the number of types of threats the victim received.

reported in a prompt manner = 1, victim did not report in a prompt manner = 0; Beichner & Spohn, 2005).

Victim credibility factors. Victim credibility factors refers to two measures that relate to the victim's credibility. Victim credibility is dichotomously coded where 1 indicates that law enforcement questioned the victim's credibility (law enforcement officer questioned the victim's credibility = 1, law enforcement did not question the victim's credibility = 0; Kaiser et al., 2017; O'Neal, 2017). Risk-taking behaviors are included as a continuous measure that encompasses whether the victim consumed alcohol prior to the incident, whether the victim was drunk during the incident, or if the victim was unconscious (arrest model *Mean* = 0.48 and initial charge filing model *Mean* = 0.49, ranges 0 to 3; Beichner & Spohn, 2005; Campbell et al., 2015; O'Neal, 2017).

Suspect-victim relationship. The relationship between the victim and suspect is dummy coded and includes intimate, relative, acquaintance, and stranger (Campbell et al., 2015). For this thesis, the suspect-victim relationship refers to whether the relationship is with a non-stranger suspect or the suspect is a stranger (suspect is a non-stranger = 1, with stranger as the reference category; Kaiser et al., 2017).

Demographic and agency characteristics. Age of the victim is a continuous measure (arrest model *Mean* = 15.18 and initial charge filing model *Mean* = 15.23, ranges 12 to 17); age of the suspect is a continuous measure (arrest model *Mean* = 27.58 and initial charge filing model *Mean* = 29.26, ranges 11 to 74). Victim and suspect identifying as a minority race was dichotomously coded (victim/suspect identified as a minority race = 1, victim/suspect did not identify as a minority race = 0; O'Neal, 2017). The law enforcement agency indicates whether the adolescent sexual assault case was

reported to the Los Angeles Police Department or the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LAPD = 1, LASD = 0; O'Neal, 2017).

Table 2

Coding Scheme for Arrest and Initial Charge Filing.

Dependent variable	
Police arrested suspect	Yes = 1, No = 0
Initial charge filed	Yes = 1, No = 0
Independent variables	
<i>Willingness to cooperate</i>	
Victim cooperated at investigation	Yes = 1, No = 0
Number of victim interviews	Number of victim interviews
Parent/caregiver reported incident to law enforcement	Yes = 1, No = 0
<i>Case Seriousness</i>	
Aggravated rape	Yes = 1, No = 0
Suspect threatened victim	Number of threat types
<i>Strength of evidence</i>	
Physical evidence collected	Number of physical evidence types
Prompt reporting	Yes = 1, No = 0
<i>Victim credibility factors</i>	
Victim credibility question by officer	Yes = 1, No = 0
Number of risk-taking behaviors	Number of risk-taking behaviors
<i>Suspect-victim relationship</i>	
Non-stranger	Yes = 1, No = 0
<i>Demographic and agency characteristics</i>	
Victim age	In years
Suspect age	In years
Victim minority race	Yes = 1, No = 0
Suspect minority race	Yes = 1, No = 0
LAPD	Yes = 1, No = 0

Analytic Strategy

Descriptive statistics were used to examine the frequency, mean, and standard deviations of the variables included in the three models. VIFs and tolerance were examined to assess if multicollinearity was present. Missing data was examined using Little's Missing Completely at Random (MCAR) test to assess whether listwise deleted caused biased parameters. The results of the MCAR indicate that data were missing completely at random (Little MCAR $\chi^2 = 15.58$, $df = 14$, $p = 0.34$; Graham, 2009).

Therefore, listwise deletion was used to eliminate the missing data because the MCAR results indicate that the likelihood of estimator bias is reduced. As a result of listwise deletion, the victim cooperation model sample size was reduced to 259 adolescent sexual assault cases, the arrest model sample size was reduced to 205 adolescent sexual assault cases, and the initial charge filing model sample size was reduced to 152 adolescent sexual assault cases. Given the dichotomous nature of the dependent variables, logistic regression was used to analyze the probability of the independent variables influence on the dependent variables. Odds ratios are presented. Additionally, prior to conducting logistic regression analyses, the Hosmer and Lemeshow test was used to examine the goodness-of-fit of the models.

CHAPTER IV

Results

This chapter presents the results from the current study on adolescent sexual assault case processing. Prior to conducting primary analyses, variance inflation factors (VIFs) and tolerance levels were examined to assess collinearity of the independent variables. Tables 3 and 4 demonstrate that the VIFs and tolerance levels do not exceed the appropriate cutoffs (values are less than 4.0 and greater than 0.2, respectfully; Belsley, Kuh, & Welsch, 1980; Fox, 1991). The analyses were conducted in three stages. First, descriptive statistics were examined to assess the composition of the measures used in the analysis. Second, bivariate correlations were used to evaluate whether the independent variables of interest were correlated with the dependent variables. Third, due to the nature of the dependent variables, logistic regression models were used to examine the effects of decision-making factors on victim cooperation, arrest, and initial charges being filed.

Table 3

Testing for Multicollinearity: Victim Cooperation.

	VIF	Tolerance
Dependent variable		
Victim cooperation	1.11	0.90
Independent variables		
<i>Adolescent case factors</i>		
Parent/caregiver reported incident to law enforcement	1.10	0.91
<i>Strength of evidence</i>		
Physical evidence collected	1.18	0.85
Prompt reporting	1.14	0.88
Number of witnesses	1.12	0.89
<i>Victim credibility factors</i>		
Victim credibility question by officer	1.14	0.88
Inconsistent victim testimony	1.13	0.89
Number of risk-taking behaviors	1.36	0.74
Resistance to the incident	1.06	0.94
<i>Suspect-victim relationship</i>		
Non-stranger	1.14	0.88
<i>Demographic and agency characteristics</i>		
Victim age	1.08	0.93
Suspect age	1.16	0.86
Victim minority race	1.40	0.72
Suspect minority race	1.45	0.69
LAPD	1.20	0.83
	Mean VIF	
	1.18	

Table 4

Testing for Multicollinearity: Arrest and Initial Charge Filing.

	Arrest		Initial Charge	
	VIF	Tolerance	VIF	Tolerance
Dependent variable				
Police arrested suspect	1.51	0.66	--	--
Initial charge filed	--	--	1.31	0.76
Independent variables				
<i>Willingness to cooperate</i>				
Victim cooperated at investigation	1.41	0.71	1.29	0.77
Number of victim interviews	1.18	0.85	1.18	0.85
Parent/caregiver reported incident to law enforcement	1.12	0.89	1.12	0.89
<i>Case Seriousness</i>				
Aggravated rape	1.64	0.61	1.82	0.55
Suspect threatened victim	1.08	0.92	1.10	0.91
<i>Strength of evidence</i>				
Physical evidence collected	1.61	0.62	1.79	0.56
Prompt reporting	1.16	0.86	1.18	0.85
<i>Victim credibility factors</i>				
Victim credibility question by officer	1.09	0.91	1.08	0.93
Number of risk-taking behaviors	1.31	0.77	1.42	0.71
<i>Suspect-victim relationship</i>				
Non-stranger	1.39	0.72	1.44	0.69
<i>Demographic and agency characteristics</i>				
Victim age	1.13	0.89	1.20	0.83
Suspect age	1.27	0.78	1.21	0.83
Victim minority race	1.58	0.63	1.80	0.55
Suspect minority race	1.73	0.58	1.98	0.51
LAPD	1.16	0.86	1.21	0.83
	Mean VIF		Mean VIF	
	1.34		1.38	

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were examined to assess the dependent and independent variables used in this thesis. The following tables (Table 5-7) demonstrates the composition of the study's samples, which presents the number of adolescent sexual assault cases per variable and the mean or percentage of each variable used. Recall, each sample size is different based on the dependent variable being examined; therefore, frequencies, percentages and means vary throughout this section. Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics of the measures used in the victim cooperation model. Table 6

displays the descriptive statistics of the measures used in the arrest model. Finally, Table 7 demonstrates the descriptive statistics of the measures used in the initial charging model.

Victim cooperation model. Adolescent victims cooperated with law enforcement at the investigation stage of case processing in 73.4% of the sexual assault cases.

Important to the current study, parents/caregivers reported the adolescent sexual assault incident to law enforcement in 22.4% of the sexual assault cases. For the physical evidence scale, the mean score of physical evidence collected in the cases was 1 (0.98). Adolescent victims reported within an hour of the incident in 15.4% of sexual assault cases. Adolescent sexual assault cases had an average of 1.1 number of witnesses to the offense. Law enforcement officers questioned the adolescent victims' credibility in 7% of the sexual assault cases. Officers indicated that the adolescent victims' testimony was inconsistent in 19.3% of the cases. For the risk-taking behaviors scale, the mean score of risk-taking behaviors was 0.4. In addition, adolescent victims resisted the sexual victimization incident in 70.3% of the sexual assault cases. Among the suspect-victim relationships, non-stranger (76.8%) was the most common relationship type among the adolescent sexual assault cases. Approximately 23% (23.2%) of the adolescent sample reported the suspect was a stranger. The average victim age of the sample was 15.3, with the average suspect age as 27.2. Nearly 80% (79.9%) of the adolescent victims identified as a minority race, with 81.5% of the suspects identifying as a minority race. Nearly 26% (25.9%) of the adolescent sexual assault cases were reported to LAPD, with 74.1% of the adolescent sexual assault cases being reported to LASD.

Table 5

Descriptives Table for Victim Cooperation Model (N = 259).

	n	% or Mean
Dependent Variables		
Victim cooperated	190	73.36%
Independent Variables		
<i>Adolescent case factors</i>		
Parent/caregiver reported incident to law enforcement	58	22.39%
<i>Strength of evidence</i>		
Physical evidence collected	259	0.98
Prompt reporting	40	15.44%
Number of witnesses	259	1.08
<i>Victim credibility factors</i>		
Victim credibility question by officer	18	6.95%
Inconsistent victim testimony	50	19.31%
Number of risk-taking behaviors	259	0.44
Resistance to the incident	182	70.27%
<i>Suspect-victim relationship</i>		
Non-stranger	199	76.83%
Stranger (reference)	60	23.17%
<i>Demographic and agency characteristics</i>		
Victim age	259	15.27
Suspect age	259	27.19
Victim minority race	207	79.92%
Suspect minority race	211	81.47%
LAPD	67	25.87%
LASD (reference)	192	74.13%

Arrest model. Because a suspect can only be arrested and charged if identified, the arrest model and the initial charge filing model (discussed in more detail below) include only those cases where the identity of the suspect was known to law enforcement. Therefore, the following descriptive statistics reflect cases where suspects were identified. Identified suspects were arrested in 54.6% of the adolescent sexual assault cases, and adolescent victims cooperated with law enforcement during the investigation stage in 76.6% of the sexual assault cases that involved identified suspects. Victims participated in an average number of 2.1 victim interviews. Moreover, parents/caregivers reported the incident to law enforcement in 21.5% of the adolescent sexual assault cases that involved an identified suspect. Almost 50% (49.3%) of the sexual assault cases

aligned with aggravated rape. The average number of threats the adolescent victims received was 0.4. For the physical evidence scale, the mean score of physical evidence collected in the sexual assault cases was 1.1. Of the adolescent sexual assault cases in the arrest model, 15.1% of the adolescent victims reported in a prompt manner. Law enforcement officers questioned the adolescent victims' credibility in 8.3% of the sexual assault cases. For the risk-taking behavior scale, the mean score of risk-taking behavior was 0.5. Among the suspect-victim relationships, a non-stranger relationship (85.4%) was more common in the adolescent sexual assault cases. Approximately 15% (14.6%) of the sexual assault cases had a stranger suspect-victim relationship. The average victim age was 15.2, with the average suspect age as 27.6. Nearly 80% (78.5%) of the adolescent victims identified as a minority race, with 81.2% of the suspects identifying as a minority race. Approximately 24% (23.9%) of the sexual assault cases were reported to LAPD, with 76.1% of the sexual assault cases being reported to the LASD.

Table 6

Descriptives Table for Arrest Model (N = 205).

	n	% or Mean
Dependent variable		
Police arrested suspect	112	54.63%
Independent variables		
<i>Willingness to cooperate</i>		
Victim cooperated at investigation	157	76.59%
Number of victim interviews	205	2.13
Parent/caregiver reported incident to law enforcement	44	21.46%
<i>Case Seriousness</i>		
Aggravated rape	101	49.27%
Suspect threatened victim	205	0.40
<i>Strength of evidence</i>		
Physical evidence collected	205	1.06
Prompt reporting	31	15.12%
<i>Victim credibility factors</i>		
Victim credibility question by officer	17	8.29%
Number of risk-taking behaviors	205	0.48
<i>Suspect-victim relationship</i>		
Non-stranger	175	85.37%
Stranger (reference)	30	14.63%
<i>Demographic and agency characteristics</i>		
Victim age	205	15.18
Suspect age	205	27.58
Victim minority race	161	78.54%
Suspect minority race	167	81.46%
LAPD	49	23.90%
LASD (reference)	156	76.10%

Initial charge filing model. Initial charges can only be filed if law enforcement officers refer the adolescent sexual assault case to prosecution. The initial charge filing model, therefore, only includes cases where officers referred the case to prosecution. Prosecution filed an initial charge in 52% of the adolescent sexual assault cases that were referred to the District Attorney. Adolescent victims cooperated with law enforcement during the investigation stage in 87.5% of the sexual assault cases that were referred to prosecution. Victims participated in an average number of 2.2 victim interviews. Moreover, parents/caregivers reported the incident to law enforcement in 20.4% of the adolescent sexual assault cases. Approximately 47% (47.4%) of the sexual assault cases

aligned with aggravated rape. The average number of threats the adolescent victims received was 0.4. For the physical evidence scale, the mean score of physical evidence collected in the sexual assault cases was 1.2. Of the adolescent sexual assault cases in the initial charge filing model, 17.1% of the adolescent victims reported in a prompt manner. Law enforcement officers questioned the adolescent victims' credibility in 5.3% of the sexual assault cases that were referred to prosecution. For the risk-taking behavior scale, the mean score of risk-taking behavior was 0.5. Among the suspect-victim relationships, a non-stranger relationship (87.5%) was more common in the adolescent sexual assault cases, with 12.5% of the sexual assault cases involving a stranger as the suspect. The average victim age is 15.2, with the average suspect age as 29.3. A little more than 75% (76.3%) of the adolescent victims identified as a minority race, with 79.6% of the suspects identifying as a minority race. Twenty-three percent of the sexual assault cases were reported to LAPD, with 77% of the sexual assault cases being reported to the LASD.

Table 7

Descriptives Table for Initial Charge Filing Model (N = 152).

	n	% or Mean
Dependent variable		
Initial charge filed	79	51.97%
Independent variables		
<i>Willingness to cooperate</i>		
Victim cooperated at investigation	133	87.50%
Number of victim interviews	152	2.22
Parent/caregiver reported incident to law enforcement	31	20.39%
<i>Case Seriousness</i>		
Aggravated rape	72	47.37%
Suspect threatened victim	152	0.39
<i>Strength of evidence</i>		
Physical evidence collected	152	1.20
Prompt reporting	26	17.11%
<i>Victim credibility factors</i>		
Victim credibility question by officer	8	5.26%
Number of risk-taking behaviors	152	0.49
<i>Suspect-victim relationship</i>		
Non-stranger	133	87.50%
Stranger (reference)	19	12.50%
<i>Demographic and agency characteristics</i>		
Victim age	152	15.23
Suspect age	152	29.26
Victim minority race	116	76.32%
Suspect minority race	121	79.61%
LAPD	35	23.03%
LASD (reference)	117	76.97%

Logistic Regression: Victim Cooperation Model

The results of the analyses testing the independent variables' influence on victim cooperation are presented in Table 8. Results indicate that one theoretically-relevant demographic variable influenced the likelihood that a victim would cooperate with law enforcement at the investigation stage. Additionally, one measure of evidentiary strength approached significance. Suspect age significantly influenced the likelihood of victim cooperation, with victim cooperation more likely as the suspect age increased ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.06$, $b = 0.06$, $p < .05$). In addition, physical evidence collection approached significance ($p = 0.052$) in the victim cooperation model, which indicates that victims were more

likely to cooperate in cases that included more types of evidence collected from the crime scene, victim, and/or suspect ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.30$, $b = 0.26$, $p < .10$).

Table 8

Logistic Regression Analysis: Victim Cooperation (N = 259).

Variable	<i>b</i>	S.E.	OR
Independent variables			
<i>Adolescent case factors</i>			
Parent/caregiver reported incident to law enforcement	-0.24	0.37	0.79
<i>Strength of evidence</i>			
Physical evidence collected	0.26	0.13	1.30
Prompt reporting	0.55	0.48	1.72
Number of witnesses	0.08	0.12	1.08
<i>Victim credibility factors</i>			
Victim credibility question by officer	-0.24	0.57	0.79
Inconsistent victim testimony	-0.49	0.38	0.61
Number of risk-taking behaviors	-0.14	0.18	0.87
Resistance to the incident	-0.07	0.34	0.93
<i>Suspect-victim relationship</i>			
Non-stranger	-0.11	0.39	0.90
<i>Demographic and agency characteristics</i>			
Victim age	-0.07	0.11	0.93
Suspect age	0.06**	0.02	1.06
Victim minority race	-0.34	0.47	0.71
Suspect minority race	-0.74	0.53	0.48
LAPD	-0.40	0.36	0.67
Constant	1.70	1.89	5.46
Nagelkerke R ²	0.16		
Hosmer and Lemeshow test	Chi-Square	df	Sig
	5.73	8	0.68

Note. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. LASD and stranger are reference categories.

Logistic Regression: Arrest Model

The results of the logistic regressing assessing the decision to arrest are presented in Table 9. Results of this model indicate that six measures influence the police decision to arrest a suspect in adolescent sexual assault cases. Overall, one measure of the willingness to cooperate, two measures of evidentiary strength, one victim credibility factor, and two demographic characteristic variables influenced the likelihood of arrest in adolescent sexual assault cases. Regarding willingness to cooperate, police officers were almost 14 times more likely to arrest a suspect when the victim cooperated with the

investigation ($\text{Exp}(B) = 13.82$, $b = 2.63$, $p < .001$). Regarding the strength of evidence, the likelihood of arrest increased as more types of evidence were obtained from the crime scene, victim, and/or suspect ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.49$, $b = 0.40$, $p < .05$). In addition, arrest was almost four times more likely if the victim made a prompt report ($\text{Exp}(B) = 3.88$, $b = 1.36$, $p < .05$). Regarding victim credibility, the likelihood of arrest decreased if the law enforcement officer questioned the victim's credibility ($\text{Exp}(B) = 0.26$, $b = -1.33$, $p < .05$). Lastly, victim age and suspect age significantly influenced the likelihood of arrest, with officers more likely to arrest if the victim is younger and more likely to arrest older suspects ($\text{Exp}(B) = 0.74$, $b = -0.30$, $p < .05$; $\text{Exp}(B) = 1.05$, $b = 0.05$, $p < .05$).

Table 9

Logistic Regression Analysis: Arrest (N = 205).

Variable	<i>b</i>	S.E.	OR
Independent variables			
<i>Willingness to cooperate</i>			
Victim cooperated at investigation	2.63***	0.54	13.82
Number of victim interviews	0.50	0.30	1.65
Parent/caregiver reported incident to law enforcement	-0.44	0.45	0.65
<i>Case Seriousness</i>			
Aggravated rape	0.02	0.45	1.02
Suspect threatened victim	-0.12	0.30	0.89
<i>Strength of evidence</i>			
Physical evidence collected	0.40*	0.17	1.49
Prompt reporting	1.36*	0.57	3.88
<i>Victim credibility factors</i>			
Victim credibility question by officer	-1.33*	0.68	0.26
Number of risk-taking behaviors	-0.09	0.20	0.92
<i>Suspect-victim relationship</i>			
Non-stranger	0.83	0.59	2.29
<i>Demographic and agency characteristics</i>			
Victim age	-0.30*	0.13	0.74
Suspect age	0.05*	0.02	1.05
Victim minority race	-0.86	0.53	0.42
Suspect minority race	0.24	0.57	1.27
LAPD	0.68	0.46	1.96
Constant	-0.48	2.31	0.62
Nagelkerke R ²	0.45		
Hosmer and Lemeshow test	Chi-Square	df	Sig
	6.49	8	0.59

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. LASD and stranger are reference categories.

Logistic Regression: Initial Charge Filing Model

The results of the logistic regressing assessing the decision to file initial charges are presented in Table 10. Results of this model suggest that four variables influenced the likelihood of initial charges being filed. Overall, one measure of the willingness to cooperate, two measures of the evidentiary strength, and one demographic measure influenced the likelihood of initial charge filing. Initial charge filing was almost 17 times more likely if the victim cooperated with law enforcement during the investigation ($\text{Exp}(B) = 16.61$, $b = 2.81$, $p < .01$). Regarding strength of evidence, the likelihood of initial charge filing increased as more types of evidence were collected from the crime scene, victim, and/or suspect ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.58$, $b = 0.46$, $p < .05$). In addition, initial charge filing was three times more likely when the adolescent victim reported the incident promptly to law enforcement ($\text{Exp}(B) = 3.37$, $b = 1.21$, $p < .05$). Finally, victim age significantly influenced the likelihood of initial charges being filed, with prosecutors more likely to file charges in cases involving younger victims ($\text{Exp}(B) = 0.63$, $b = -0.47$, $p < .01$).

Table 10

Logistic Regression Analysis: Initial Charge Filing (N = 152).

Variable	<i>b</i>	S.E.	OR
Independent variables			
<i>Willingness to cooperate</i>			
Victim cooperated at investigation	2.81**	0.88	16.61
Number of victim interviews	-0.09	0.31	0.92
Parent/caregiver reported incident to law enforcement	-0.45	0.50	0.64
<i>Case Seriousness</i>			
Aggravated rape	-0.45	0.52	0.64
Suspect threatened victim	-0.03	0.34	0.97
<i>Strength of evidence</i>			
Physical evidence collected	0.46*	0.18	1.58
Prompt reporting	1.21*	0.58	3.37
<i>Victim credibility factors</i>			
Victim credibility question by officer	-0.02	0.97	0.98
Number of risk-taking behaviors	-0.23	0.22	0.79
<i>Suspect-victim relationship</i>			
Non-stranger	0.62	0.66	1.87
<i>Demographic and agency characteristics</i>			
Victim age	-0.47**	0.14	0.63
Suspect age	0.01	0.02	1.01
Victim minority race	-0.75	0.59	0.47
Suspect minority race	-0.03	0.63	0.97
LAPD	-0.04	0.51	0.96
Constant	4.34	2.37	76.74
Nagelkerke R ²	0.32		
Hosmer and Lemeshow test	Chi-Square	df	Sig
	13.85	8	0.09

Note. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. LASD and stranger are reference categories.

CHAPTER V

Discussion and Conclusion

Despite increasing scholarly interest in sexual assault case processing, the majority of the extant research focuses on adult sexual assault cases. There remains, therefore, a dearth of literature investigating adolescent sexual assault case processing (Campbell et al., 2015). More specifically, there is a need for research examining the decision-making factors of adolescent victims, law enforcement, and prosecutors within the context of adolescent sexual assault case processing. This thesis facilitates our understanding of decision making regarding adolescent victim cooperation, law enforcement arrest, and prosecutorial initial charge filing. Overall, the current thesis addresses these gaps in the literature by quantitatively examining officer case files and prosecutor charge evaluation sheets (Spohn & Tellis, 2012).

This thesis contributes to the broader body of case processing literature by examining adolescent sexual assault case processing; it addresses three research questions within the adolescent sexual assault case processing context. First, the factors that influence adolescent victim cooperation were assessed by examining case characteristics including, strength of evidence measures, victim credibility, the suspect-victim relationship, and demographic and agency factors. Second, arrest decision-making factors focused on predictors regarding the willingness to cooperate, case seriousness, strength of evidence, victim credibility, the suspect-victim relationship, and demographic and agency characteristics are assessed. Last, prosecutor initial charge filing decisions were examined by analyzing measures of the willingness to cooperate, case seriousness, evidentiary

strength, victim credibility, the suspect-victim relationship, and demographic and agency characteristics. Several findings are worthy of additional discussion.

Key Findings

First, results demonstrate that prompt reporting positively predicts arrest and initial charging in sexual assault cases involving adolescent victims. In other words, the police were more likely to arrest and the district attorney was more likely to file an initial charge in cases where the incident was reported within one hour. This is consistent with existing literature that finds arrest and initial charging is positively influenced by the timeliness of reporting (Frohmann, 1991; LaFree, 1989; Wood et al., 2011). In addition, prior literature has linked the timeliness of reporting a sexual assault to an officer's assessment of victim credibility. In other words, law enforcement's perception of victims' credibility may diminish in cases where incidents are not reported in what they consider to be a prompt manner, since officers may associate delayed reporting with false allegations (Jordan, 2004; O'Neal, 2017). Conversely, this finding contradicts the results of Campbell and colleagues (2015) study of the differences between decision-making factors for adult and juvenile sexual assault cases. They found that reporting in a prompt manner influenced arrest decisions for adult sex crime investigators; however, juvenile sex crime investigators did not rely on prompt reporting when deciding to arrest in adolescent sexual assault cases (Campbell et al., 2015). The current study's finding indicates that the availability of physical evidence facilitates corroboration of the crime occurrence. Campbell and colleagues (2015) found that juvenile sexual assault cases are less likely to obtain physical evidence to corroborate the incident when comparing to adult cases. Therefore, this finding may indicate law enforcement and prosecution's

reliance on physical evidence. Johnson and Peterson (2008) suggest that the availability of evidence decreases when the case is not reported in a prompt manner, which may negatively influence the perception of the case

Second, results demonstrate that physical evidence is salient in adolescent sexual assault case processing. Evidence collection positively influences the likelihood of arrest and initial charges being filed; additionally, physical evidence approached significance in the victim cooperation model ($p = 0.052$). This is consistent with prior case processing research, which consistently finds that the presence of physical evidence significantly influences the likelihood of these three outcomes (Bouffard, 2000; Campbell et al., 2015; Frazier & Horney, 1996; Kerstetter, 1990; Tasca et al., 2013). It is important to note that the obtainment of physical evidence in both adult sexual assault cases and adolescent sexual assault cases is difficult to acquire (Bouffard, 2000; Campbell et al., 2015).

Although physical evidence is difficult to obtain in adolescent sexual assault cases, this finding suggests that when physical evidence is acquired, physical evidence increases the likelihood of a cooperative victim, arrest, and filing of initial charges. Additionally, this finding suggests that the inclusion of multiple forms of physical evidence increases the likelihood of victim cooperation, arrest, and initial charging. Previous literature suggests that physical evidence helps to establish corroborating evidence to validate crime occurrence and the victim's testimony (Campbell et al., 2015; Frazier & Horney, 1996; Kerstetter, 1990; Tasca et al., 2013).

Third, victim cooperation significantly impacts the likelihood of arrest and initial charging decisions in sexual assault cases involving adolescent victims. Specifically, this study found that arrest was approximately 14 times more likely and filing of initial

charges was almost 17 times more likely when the victim cooperated. This finding is consistent with previous literature (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Kaiser et al., 2017; O'Neal, 2017; Spohn et al., 2001; Spohn & Tellis, 2014; Wood et al., 2011). However, Campbell and colleagues (2015) found that victim cooperation was not important for sex-crime investigators when assessing adolescent sexual assault case processing. The differences between Campbell and colleagues (2015) study and the current study may be due to the type of investigating officer or the methodologies use to assess cooperation. Campbell and associates' (2015) interviewed sex-crime investigators, which suggests that the investigators received specialized training and solely investigate sexual offenses. Therefore, sex-crime detectives may be more likely to receive specialized training that dispels the misperceptions of sexual assault (Lonsway, Welch, & Fitzgerald, 2001). In addition, the current study's methodology differentiates from Campbell and colleagues' (2015) study by examining law enforcement officers' sexual assault case files, which indicates the information law enforcement officers deemed relevant to the case and their perception of the victim and suspect. The current study suggests that law enforcement and prosecutors may not differentiate between adult and adolescent samples regarding the influence of victim cooperation when making arrest and initial charging decisions. Moreover, this finding may suggest that investigators and prosecution rely on victim cooperation when establishing victim credibility and physical evidence (Bouffard, 2000; Beichner & Spohn, 2005). This thesis demonstrates that law enforcement officers and investigators should work to secure victim cooperation early on in the investigation of sexual assault regardless of whether the victim is an adult or adolescent (Kaiser et al., 2017; O'Neal, 2017; Wood et al., 2011).

Finally, this thesis found that the age of the victim and the age of the suspect influences victim cooperation, arrest, and initial charging. More specifically, sexual assault cases with younger adolescent victims are more likely to result in an arrest and initial charges being filed. Stated alternatively, as the age of the adolescent victim increased, the likelihood of arrest and initial charges being filed decreased. This finding is consistent with previous literature, which found that cases involving adolescent victims between the ages of 13 and 15 were more likely to traverse the criminal justice system compared to cases involving older adolescent victims (Campbell et al., 2012). This finding may indicate that as adolescents approach adulthood, law enforcement and prosecution are more likely to attribute blame to the victim (Hicks & Tite, 1998; Ullman, 2010) and, therefore, less likely to place blame on the suspect. However, this finding may also be attributed to the fact that adolescents are more likely to be victimized by their peers. Therefore, police officers and prosecutors may perceive an incident as less credible or legitimate if the suspect and victim are both older adolescents (Finkelhor et al., 2001; Kingsnorth et al., 1999).

In addition to victim age, the age of the suspect influenced victim cooperation and arrest. More specifically, as the age of the suspect increased, the likelihood of victim cooperation and arrest increased. Regarding cooperation, adolescent victims may perceive their victimization as more serious if their perpetrator is an adult, enhancing cooperation in these cases. Moreover, if the victim and suspect are peers, the incident may be consensual; however, legally the incident is considered non-consensual. Therefore, law enforcement and victims may perceive the victimization as more serious if perpetrated by an adult. This finding may be explained by the power and control

framework, which indicates that younger victims are considered powerless and unaware; therefore, older perpetrators are able to control and manipulate younger victims (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). Broadly, law enforcement may perceive the suspect as more culpable when the victimization is towards someone who cannot legally offer consent; therefore, law enforcement officers are more likely to arrest suspects who exceed the age of adolescence (Cross et al., 2003).

Theoretical Implications

Sexual assault case processing research has greatly enhanced our knowledge on victims and criminal justice actors decision making which has assisted in establishing implications (Alderden & Long, 2016; Beichner & Spohn, 2005; Campbell et al., 2015; Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Finkelhor et al., 2001; Kaiser et al., 2017; O’Neal, 2017; O’Neal et al., 2016; Tasca et al., 2013; Walsh et al., 2010). The findings from this thesis demonstrate that both legal and extra-legal factors influence decision makers within adolescent sexual assault case processing. Literature examining adolescent sexual assault case processing is limited, having produced inconsistent findings on what factors influence case processing. This thesis aimed to contribute to this limited, but growing, body of literature by addressing the factors that influence decision making at multiple stages within adolescent sexual assault case processing.

In addition, this thesis further explicates the relationship between police and court actors in regards to downstream orientation (Campbell et al., 2015; Spohn, White, and Tellis, 2014). Arrest and initial charging decisions were influenced by identical measures, with the exception of suspect age; therefore, this finding may suggest that law enforcement officers are making decisions based on their perceived expectations of

prosecution (Spohn & Tellis, 2010). For example, law enforcement focusing their decision making on the standards of prosecution may increase the likelihood of evidence collection, which may increase the likelihood of prosecution accepting the sexual assault case. Adhering to the standards of prosecution, however, will eliminate cases that would have proceeded through the system previous to the increased standards. The arresting standard for law enforcement is probable cause, however, adherence to prosecution standards will increase arresting standards to beyond a reasonable doubt (Spohn & Tellis, 2010). Sexual assault investigations will diminish if law enforcement adhere to these higher standards, consequently, apprehension of perpetrators and favorable victim outcomes will decrease (Pattavina et al., 2016).

Empirical Implications

Several empirical implications are worth noting. First, this thesis uses case file data from the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Within the United States, the LAPD is one of the largest, diverse agencies, and the department is known for its implementation of new innovations (Stone, Foglesong, & Cole, 2009). Moreover, the utilization of case files from investigators allows for an in-depth examination of the perceptions of law enforcement during the progression of sexual assault cases. Additionally, information regarding the acceptance or rejection from prosecution is included in the analyses to facilitate an understanding of initial charging decision making.

Policy and Practice Implications

This thesis' findings demonstrate that victim cooperation influences arrest and initial charging decisions more than legal factors, such as physical evidence and prompt

reporting. Cooperative victims, therefore, are important for successful sexual assault case processing. Law enforcement agencies and district attorney offices need to implement policies that facilitate officers and prosecutors in establishing and maintaining cooperation with adolescent victims of sexual assault (Kaiser et al., 2017). By facilitating cooperation, victim cooperation may positively influence law enforcement officers and prosecutors' case clearance rates, which improves the actors' perceived reputation from self, colleagues, supervisors, and other criminal justice personnel. Implementation of policies targeting victim cooperation should entail training on sexual assault, which should dispel the misperceptions of sexual assault, incorporate trauma-informed approaches, and promote respectfulness to victims. In addition to the implementation of training to establish and maintain victim cooperation, law enforcement officers and prosecution should provide victims with community resources they may need. Victims may be more confident in their ability to cooperate with law enforcement and prosecution if they are able to obtain support. Furthermore, the development of specialized units on sexual assault or sex crimes diminishes the amount of actors involved in the progression of the case, which will aid in establishing rapport with victims (Beichner & Spohn, 2005; Kaiser et al., 2017). This implementation of specialized units may help facilitate victim cooperation for police officers and prosecution.

Limitations

This current thesis is not without limitations. It is important to note that this thesis uses adolescent sexual assault case files from one jurisdiction, Los Angeles County (LAPD and LASD). Therefore, the findings from this thesis may be limited in generalizability. Consequently, there is a need for research to examine the decision

making of adolescent victims, law enforcement, and prosecution in differing geographical locations or jurisdictions. Another limitation to this thesis is the relatively low R-squared of the victim cooperation model. Having a low R-square indicates that the current independent variables are not effectively measuring victim cooperation. This suggests a need to continue to assess what influences adolescent victims to cooperate with law enforcement. Moreover, the victim cooperation model may be further limited by the measurement of the variable, which assesses whether the victim cooperated through the perception of law enforcement officers.

Directions for Future Research

Despite the above mentioned limitations, the findings from this thesis provide a solid foundation for future research. First, future work should continue to examine the relationship between the age of the victim and suspect on victim cooperation, arrest, and initial charging. More specifically, further research should assess the following age dyads: younger adolescent victim/younger adolescent suspect, younger adolescent victim/older adolescent suspect, older adolescent victim/older adolescent suspect, older adolescent victim/younger adolescent suspect, younger adolescent victim/adult suspect, and older adolescent victim/adult suspect in order to further establish whether decision making is influenced by victim credibility and/or power dynamics. Second, additional studies should examine the role of downstream orientation at later stages in adolescent sexual assault case processing. More specifically, there remains a need for understanding whether prosecution's decision making is influenced by their perceived jury and judge interpretations of the adolescent sexual assault case. Finally, future research should further assess whether specialized sex crime training influences the reliance on victim

cooperation in arrest decisions. As both arrest and initial charging are influenced by cooperation, victims may feel unsafe or perceive themselves as illegitimate; therefore, victims may withdraw their cooperation. Nonetheless, victim cooperation greatly influences the likelihood of arrest and initial charges being filed; consequently, law enforcement should work to establish and maintain victim cooperation (Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001). Future research is needed to understand how to facilitate victim cooperation with law enforcement.

Conclusion

The current thesis used a case processing framework to assess the influence of decision-making factors on victim cooperation, arrest, and initial charging in sexual assault cases involving adolescent victims. Of the decision-making factors examined in the victim cooperation model, two variables (physical evidence and suspect age) were found to influence the likelihood of adolescent victim cooperation with law enforcement. Regarding the arrest model, six measures (victim cooperation, physical evidence, prompt reporting, victim credibility, age of the victim, and age of the suspect) were found to significantly influence the decision to arrest. Of the decision-making factors assessed in the initial charge filing model, four measures (victim cooperation, physical evidence, prompt reporting, and the age of the victim) were found to significantly influence the decision to file an initial charge. Therefore, this study further contributes to the scholarly work of adolescent sexual assault case processing by providing evidence that victim cooperation, evidentiary strength, and age of the victim and suspect influences case processing decision making. The findings from this thesis are consistent with previous literature on adolescent and adult sexual assault case processing (Bouffard, 2000;

Campbell et al., 2015; Campbell et al., 2012; Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Frazier & Horney, 1996; Frohmann, 1991; Kaiser et al., 2017; Kerstetter, 1990; O'Neal, 2017; LaFree, 1989; Spohn et al., 2001; Spohn & Tellis, 2014; Tasca et al., 2013; Wood et al., 2011). The contributions from this thesis will improve policies and practices regarding the treatment of adolescent victims, arrest, and initial charging in adolescent sexual assault case processing.

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APPENDIX A

Risk-Taking Behavior Items, Factor Loadings, and Reliability Estimates

Reliability $\alpha = 0.668$		Loading 1	Loading 2	Loading 3	Loading 4
1.	Victim walking alone late at night	--	--	--	--
2.	Victim accepted a ride from a stranger	--	0.867	--	--
3.	Victim went to the suspect's residence	--	--	0.603	--
4.	Victim invited the suspect to their residence	--	--	--	--
5.	Victim was in a bar alone	--	--	--	--
6.	Victim was where drugs were sold	--	--	--	--
7.	Victim was drinking alcohol	0.850	--	--	--
8.	Victim was drunk	0.952	--	--	--
9.	Victim was using illegal drugs	--	--	0.443	0.706
10.	Victim was passed out (not drugged)	0.729	--	--	--

Note: Extraction Method: Principle Axis Factoring, Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization, factor loadings were not shown if below 0.40.

APPENDIX B*Risk-Taking Behavior Items, Factor Loadings, and Reliability Estimates*

Reliability $\alpha = 0.891$		Loading
1.	Victim was drinking alcohol	0.881
2.	Victim was drunk	0.986
3.	Victim was passed out (not drugged)	0.716

Note: Extraction Method: Principle Axis Factoring, factor loadings were not shown if below 0.40.

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http://aquila.usm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1389&context=honors_theses

Manuscripts in Progress

Meeker, K. A., O’Neal, E. N., & Pyrooz, D. “Street Values and Adherence to The Code: An Examination of Gender and Gang Status.”

Meeker, K. A., Perez, K., Hayes, B. E., O’Neal, E. N., Butler, H. D. “Bystander Intervention: An Examination of Risk, Likelihood and Practice.”

Meeker, K. A., O’Neal, E. N., & Hayes, B. E. “Assessing Adolescent Victim Cooperation in Sexual Assault Cases.”

Technical Reports

Hayes, B. E., O’Neal, E. N., **Meeker, K. A.**, Steele S. A. Brady, P. Q., Bills, M. A. (2018). *Assessing Online Strategies Aimed at Enhancing Campus Safety*. Campus Sexual Assault Series, Vol. 2, Iss. 2. Crime Victims’ Institute. In progress.

Presentations

(*Denotes presenter)

***Meeker, K.**, O’Neal, E.N., & Hayes, B.E. “Adolescent Victim Cooperation in Sexual Assault Cases.” Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Philadelphia, PA, November 2017.

***Meeker, K.** & O’Neal, E. N. “Street Values and Adherence to The Code: An Examination of Gender and Gang Status.” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, Kansas City, MO, March 2017.

***Meeker, K.** “Perceptions of University Community Members Regarding Alcohol Restriction Policies.” University of Southern Mississippi Undergraduate Research Symposium, April 2016

***Meeker, K.** “Perceptions of University Community Members Regarding Alcohol Restriction Policies and Sexual Assault Prevention Programs.” University of Southern Mississippi Undergraduate Research Symposium, April 2015

Honors, Awards, and Scholarships

- Graduate Studies Travel Funding, 1,000 Dollars, Sam Houston State University, 2017-2018
- General Graduate Studies Scholarship, Sam Houston State University, Summer 2017
- Texas Public Educational Grant, Sam Houston State University, Summer 2017
- Conference Travel Funding, Crime Victims Institute, 555 Dollars, Sam Houston State University, October 2016
- Honors College Medal, University of Southern Mississippi Honors College, 2016
- Second Place at The University of Southern Mississippi Undergraduate Research Symposium, Local/Regional Division, 2015

- President's List, University of Southern Mississippi, Spring 2016
- Dean's List, University of Southern Mississippi, Fall 2015
- President's List, University of Southern Mississippi, Fall and Spring 2014-2015
- Dean's List, University of Southern Mississippi, Fall and Spring 2013-2014
- President's List, University of Southern Mississippi, Spring 2013
- Dean's List, University of Southern Mississippi, Fall 2012

Teaching and Research

Teaching Interests

- Victimology
- Gender and Crime
- Family Violence
- Juvenile Justice
- Research Methods
- Statistics I

Teaching Experience

Courses Assisted.

Lecture:

“Gender and Crime” (CRIJ 3340, Sam Houston State University).

Online:

“Victimology” (CRIJ 3350, Sam Houston State University)

“Family Violence” (CRIJ 4383, 5383, Sam Houston State University)

“Criminal Justice and Social Diversity” (CRIJ 4385, Sam Houston State University)

“Human Resources Management” (CRIJ 6394, Sam Houston State University)

Research Experience

Research Assistant (Brittany Hayes and Eryn N. O’Neal, Co-Principal Investigators), “Investigating Kat Attitudes Toward Safety (iKats).” Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX. Spring 2017 – Present

Activities and Service

University Service

Secretary, Graduate Student Organization (GSO), Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX 2018 – Present

Social Media Manager, Crime Victims Institute, Sam Houston State University, 2016-Present

Member, Graduate Student Organization (GSO), Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX, 2016 – Present

Member, Criminal Justice Student Association, Department of Criminal Justice, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS, 2014-2016

Member, Alpha Delta Pi, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS, 2014-2016

Member, Golden Key Honors Society, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS, 2013-2016

Member, National Society of Collegiate Society, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS, 2013-2016

Professional Development/Trainings

American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA, November 2017

Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Annual Meeting, Kansas City, MO, March 2017

Publishing Brown Bag, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX, February 2017

Citi Training for Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX, December 2016

Ph.D. Brown Bag, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX, November 2016

Texas Victims Services Association Research Symposium Two Day Conference, San Marcos, TX, October 2016

IRB Brown Bag, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX, October 2016

Travel Brown Bag, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX, September 2016

Citi IRB Research Training, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS, September 2015

Citi Training for Honors College, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS, February 2015

British Studies Program, Psychology, University of Southern Mississippi – Kings College, London, UK, July 2014
