WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CAMPUS SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMIZATION
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What is sexual assault victimization?
- Sexual assault victimization occurs when a person has sexual contact with another person when she/he could not consent or did not want the contact. Contact can range from touching to intercourse.
- To overcome a person’s will, or to take advantage of a person who cannot consent, perpetrators use tactics such as manipulation, verbal coercion, force, or threats of force.
- Researchers ask women to report how frequently they have experienced any form of unwanted sexual contact by specific tactics, but do not use labels such as rape or sexual assault in their surveys.
- Researchers report results as the percentage of women who reported experiencing any form of non-consensual sexual contact, and the percentage of women who experience specific forms of sexual contact by specific tactics.
  - As a result, researchers can determine estimates of rape that fit criminal codes, and can also estimate other forms of sexual assault victimization that fit the Title IX and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention definitions of sexual violence.

How common is campus sexual assault victimization?
- Campus sexual assault is common—much more common than many people imagine.
- Estimates of the number of women assaulted on campus have been remarkably consistent over time, beginning with a survey by Eugene Kanin in 1957, through recent surveys by Mary Koss and colleagues in 1987, Humphrey and Wite in 2000, Lawyer and colleagues in 2010, and Parks, et al in 2014.
- These surveys regularly show that some 15 to 20 percent of college women report rape or attempted rape during their college career, and that over 50 percent report experiencing some form of unwanted sexual contact.

What are some of the consequences of sexual assault for victims?
- Sexual assault victims are at increased risk of
  - anxiety,
  - depression,
  - PTSD,
  - substance abuse,
  - various physical health problems such as headaches, gastrointestinal problems, sleep disturbances and gynecological and reproductive health problems (see Sabina & Ho, 2014; Martin, et al 2011).
- Being sexually assaulted undermines victimized women’s perceptions of the academic climate (Cortina, et al., 1998), as well as the perception of and actual decreases in academic performance and grades (van Roosmalen & McDaniel, 1998; Jordan, et al., 2014).
- Academic consequences of sexual assault include
  - significant declines in academic achievement;
  - impaired ability to carry a normal course load;
  - increased frequency of missing classes;
  - reduced capacity to contribute to the campus community;
  - increased likelihood of dropping courses, leaving school, or transferring (AAUP Report on Campus Sexual Assault).

What is the impact of sexual assault on an academic institution?
creates an unsafe and inhospitable learning environment;
reflects negatively on campus leaders’ commitment to end campus violence;
brings scandal to the institution and its leaders;
creates distrust among parents and alumni; and damaging an institution’s standing in the community (AAUP report).
the cost of sexual violence to the students of a single national graduating class at nearly $2 billion (Brodsky, 2014).

Do most victims report their sexual assault experiences?
• Victims of sexual assault are unlikely to report their experiences.
• When they do disclose, they are more likely to do so to friends or family than to the police.
  o college women almost never report rape to the police, with studies finding rates from 0 percent for sexual coercion and date rape (Edwards, et al, 2012), to about 13 percent for forced sexual assault (Krebs, et al, 2009). On the other hand, some 41 percent or more disclose their attack to family or friends.
• Why are these numbers so low?
  o Many women feel that reporting their rape can itself be humiliating, and worry that it may result in their being ostracized and retaliated against (Ullman & Peter-Hagene, 2014).
  o They worry that they will participate in a process that often reprises the very loss of autonomy and decision-making that they suffered during their attack, and they fear, often correctly, that the resulting investigation will be confusing, invasive, and re-traumatizing—not to mention futile (Ullman & Peter-Hagene, 2014).
  o The skepticism with which their reports are often met can result in a secondary form of victimization, when the very institutions that are supposed to support and protect them fail (Smith & Freyd, 2014).

Approaches to Prevention, Deterrence, and Resistance
• There is a difference between rape deterrence and rape prevention (Lonsway, 1996)
  o Deterrence efforts focus on warning women about how to avoid being a victim. Such advice, while perhaps reducing the likelihood of an individual woman being sexually assaulted, does nothing to prevent the perpetrator from seeking out another target.
  o Empowering women ….(Rozee, 2011).
• True prevention must focus on changing the attitudes and behaviors of potential perpetrators (Paul & Gray, 2011).
• An emerging approach calls for redirecting focus from preventing negative behaviors to environmental and policy approaches that support curricula which promote health, particularly when they reduce alcohol use, negative peer attitudes and norms, harassment, assault, and physical aggression (DeGue et al., 2012; Lippy & DeGue, 2014).

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References


