

Sexual Violence in the U.S. --- Prevention, Good Practices and Policy

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**Family Violence
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Sexual Violence in the United States: Scope of the Problem

- Rape and Attempted Rape are Common though difficult to know exact numbers
 - 1 in 6 women and 1 in 33 men on average will be the victims of a rape or attempted rape (NVAWS, 2006)
 - Rape remains one of if not the most underreported crime (NVWS, 2006)
 - In 2004, according to the National Crime Victimization Survey, 191,670 people were raped or sexually assaulted, more than 500 women per day

Sexual Violence in the U.S.: Scope of the Problem Cont.

- Victims are often young and usually female
 - One-quarter of high school girls have been the victims of physical abuse, sexual abuse or date rape (Commonwealth Fund Survey of Adolescent girls, 1997)
 - Four in every five 13-14 year olds say they are personally concerned about sexual violence or other physical violence in relationships (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2003)
 - Young people aged 16-24 are raped at rates higher than any other group (NVWS, 2006)
 - More than half of the female victims and nearly three-quarters of the male victims were raped before their 18th birthdays (NVWS, 2006)
 - According to National Crime Victimization Survey, of those raped in 2004, 97 percent were women.

Sexual violence in the U.S. Cont...

- Trends are difficult to quantify due to large rates of under-reporting and differing sources of information
- DOJ report overall decline in last 15 years, however service providers see huge increases in those seeking services --- is it reporting issue or real change
- Providers also feel like seeing more younger victims, at one Philadelphia program they've started a toddler support group for those 18 months – 3 (none feel this is appropriate treatment for this age group but have no other services to provide)
- Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of female rape and sexual assault victims are assaulted by someone they know or are related to (NCVS, 2006)

Sexual Violence in Indian Country

- Highest rates of sexual violence in the U.S. are experienced by Native American and Alaska Native women ---more than 2.5 times the national average.
- 1 in 3 American Indian and Native Alaskan women will be raped in her lifetime and many women report knowing no woman who hasn't experienced sexual violence
- More than 80 percent of the perpetrators, however are non-Native men
- Though rape is always an act of violence, there is evidence that Indigenous women are more like than other women to suffer additional violence at the hands of their attackers.

(Maze of Injustice, Amnesty International Report, www.amnestyusa.org/women.)

Consequences of Sexual Violence

- Physical Health, according to NVAWS, most female victims who reported being physically injured sustained relatively minor injuries, such as scratches or bruises; 36 percent of victims say they received medical treatment;
- Longer term issues probably much larger, but less understood, e.g. obesity, ACE Study
 - www.cestudy.org.

Consequences of Sexual Violence: Mental Health

- Mental Health/Substance Abuse, more likely to struggle with mental health and substance abuse issues over time
 - Victims of dating violence more likely to use alcohol, tobacco, and cocaine; drive after drinking, engage in unhealthy weight control behaviors and commit sexually risky behaviors and become pregnant (Silverman, 2001)
 - 50 percent of youth reporting dating violence or rape report attempted suicide (Ackard and Neumark-Sztainer, 2002)
 - Girls who are raped more likely to suffer from psychiatric disorders and over 4 times more likely to suffer from drug and alcohol abuse in adulthood (Kendler, *et al* 2000)

Consequences of Sexual Violence: Reproductive health

- Reproductive Health, often longer term impacts and retrospective, e.g. late entry into prenatal care, foregoing routine gynecological care and cancer screenings, more risky sexual behavior
- Sexual and physical abuse related to unintended pregnancy and poorer pregnancy outcomes
 - Adolescent girls who experienced physical or sexual dating violence were 6 times more likely to become pregnant than their non-abused peers (Silverman, 2001)
 - As many as two-thirds of adolescents who become pregnant were sexually or physically abused some time in their lives. (Leiderman, Sally and Cari Almo. 2001).
 - Low-income adolescents who experienced physical or sexual abuse were 4 times more likely to have a rapid repeat pregnancy within 18 months (Jacoby, et al 1999)

Consequences of sexual violence --- things we don't understand well

- Also see relationship with involvement with the criminal justice system, child welfare/foster care system, welfare/TANF
- How do you tease out multiple victimizations?
- Don't fully understand the dynamics between sexual assault and later victimization and perpetration, e.g. is it that childhood victimization creates increased risk for adolescent victimization which increases risk for substance abuse/JJ system which increases risk for other victimization, etc.
- Don't fully understand age and gender differences

Responses to Sexual Violence: Policy/Legal

- Rape and attempted rape are illegal, but still often difficult to prosecute and convict.
- According to National Violence Against Women Survey, among women who were raped since the age of 18, only 7.8 percent said their rapist was criminally prosecuted, 3.3 percent said their rapist was convicted and a mere 2.2 percent said rapist was incarcerated.
- Even among women who reported to police, only 37 percent of cases were prosecuted, of those only 46 percent garnered convictions and of those about $\frac{3}{4}$ served any time.

Federal laws: Violence Against Women Act/RPE

- Most laws and policies around sexual violence are state and local
- In 1994 Crime bill included Violence Against Women act, which has been reauthorized twice, most recently in 2005/2006.
- Includes Rape Prevention and Education Program, located at the CDC, level funded at around half of authorized amounts
 - Provides formula grants to states and territories to support prevention and education programs
 - Funds promising programs particularly targeting youth and communities
 - \$45 million proposed for this year (Senate)

VAWA- Creates Sexual Assault Services Program

- Created in most recent reauthorization
- Funded at \$50 million, would be first federal dollars designated for services for rape victims
- House and Senate each include \$10 million to begin program and now are waiting for appropriations process to resolve itself
- Also includes specific set-aside for communities of color and state and territorial sexual assault coalitions

Responses to Sexual Violence: Prevention and Public Health

- Focus on prevention
- Need to change locus of responsibility for ending sexual violence, not up to victim, usually a child, to stop the act and then tell, it's up to adults/society to prevent it
- Engage men around men's use of violence and gender norms that reward and value male violence against women, frankly a lot of men don't like them either
- Early intervention and positive youth development, help kids develop positive relationships, keep them connected to a caring adult, need to start younger
- Trained and accessible mental health services, particularly for children and adolescents who have been victimized

Promising Programs to Prevent Sexual violence/Dating Violence

- Choose Respect created by the CDC builds on identified strategies for preventing dating violence www.chooserespect.org.
- Safe Dates, funded by SAMHSA out of UNC, *Foshee*, et al. Have also done yearly follow-up
- Men Can Stop Rape, Men of Strength Campaign, www.mencanstoprape.org.
- Coaching Boys Into Men, www.endabuse.org/cbim/.

Resources

- National Alliance to End Sexual Violence
www.naesv.org.
- Tjaden, Patricia and Nancy Thoennes. (2006) Extent, Nature and Consequences of Rape Victimization: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey, www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 - National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/svoverview.htm
 - National Sexual Violence Resource Center www.nsvrc.org; 1-877.739.3895
- Rape Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN)
www.rain.org; 1-800-656-HOPE

International Violence Against Women Act

- Introduced October 31, 2007 by Sens. Biden and Lugar
- Authorizes more than \$1 billion to address violence against women and girls in 10-20 countries
- Focuses on community driven and holistic approaches, health, legal, education working together
- Funds research into data collection and effective programming/operations research
- Includes focus on sexual violence in conflict, USG forced to act when severe outbreaks of rape identified

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