



The Violence Prevention & Women's Resource Center

Male Attitudes Towards Rape Victims

Assessment Report

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Choose One: Operational Assessment

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Purpose of Assessment

The U.S. Justice Department (2005) estimates that up to 25 percent of college aged women will be raped or sexually assaulted by the time they graduate from a four year institution. This epidemic is unknown largely due to the amount of "hidden rape" occurring in the United States. Sexual assault prevalence studies have coined the term "hidden rape" to emphasize that rape is one of the most underreported crimes in the United States. The U.S. Justice Department estimates that less than 5 percent of sexual assaults are reported to campus or community law enforcement. The Department of Justice Violence Against Women Office emphasizes that eighty to ninety percent of sexual assaults occurring against women between the ages of 16-24 are acquaintance crimes. Among this age group, survivors of sexual assault are most likely to know the perpetrator as an intimate partner, friend, co-worker or acquaintance. In 1990s United States Congress passed laws to ensure college and universities institutionalized strategies to prevent and respond to sexual assault. The Campus Sexual Assault Victims' Bills of Rights of 1990, 1992, and 1998 required that universities develop prevention policies and provide victim advocacy to survivors of intimate partner violence. The Federal Crime Awareness Campus Security Act of 1992 specifies that a university receiving Federal Title IV funding develop a sexual assault prevention policy (Potter, Krider, & McMahon, 2000). The research is specifically aimed at campus partners that collaborate in preventing and responding to sexual assault investigations. *The purpose of the research is to explore approaches to conducting a survivor-centered campus response to sexual assault.* The research will focus on addressing the following question:

How does a university assess the campus climate and students perceptions of rape victims, rape prevention, and false beliefs about rape?

Assessment Methodology

The survey population included all male students attending Cal Poly Pomona, 43 students participated in the survey. Survey participants were randomly selected. The Attitude Toward Rape Victims Scale assesses attitudes toward rape victims including: power and rape, women's resistance during rape, women's responsibility in rape prevention, perceptions of rape victims, and false beliefs about rape. The ARVS is to be used in research in sexual victimology, investigation of rape-related attitudes and behaviors (Ward, 1988). The ARVS has been validated through the use of four scales, Sexual conservatism (SC), Adversarial Sexual Beliefs (ASB), Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence (AIV), and Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS).

Results

The male survey population illustrated more favorable attitudes towards rape victims in comparison to the female survey population in 2010; scoring a 1.11 on a scale from 0 being most favorable to rape victims and 4 being least favorable to rape victims. Most favorable attitudes towards rape victims were seen when answering the following statements:

Sexually experienced women are not really damaged by rape

81.1% strongly disagreed, 16.2% mildly disagreed

Scoring a .22 on a likert scale of 0 being the most favorable attitude towards rape victims and 4 being the least favorable towards rape victims

In most cases when a woman was raped, she deserved it:

83.8% strongly disagreed while 16.2% disagreed

Scoring a .16 on a likert scale of 0 being the most favorable attitude towards rape victims and 4 being the least favorable towards rape victims

Beliefs where men had the least favorite attitude towards rape victims pertained to the woman's appearance or behavior. This can be seen by the following statements:

Women do not provoke rape by their appearance or behavior

22.2% disagree strongly, 22.3% disagree mildly, 11.1% neutral, 11.1% agreed mildly, 22.2% agree strongly

This area scored a 2.22 on a likert scale of 0 being most favorable to rape victims and 4 being least favorable to rape victims.

Women who wear short skirts or tight blouses are not inviting rape

13.9% disagree strongly, 27.8% disagree mildly, 19.4% neutral, 38.9% agree strongly

This area scored a 1.78 on a likert scale of 0 being most favorable to rape victims and 4 being least favorable to rape victims.

A woman who goes out alone at night puts herself in a position to be raped

37.8% disagree strongly, 13.5% disagree mildly, 16.2% neutral, 27.2% agreed mildly, 5.4% strongly agreed

This area scored a 1.49 on a likert scale of 0-4

Mixed results were seen in beliefs pertaining to alcohol use and rape (intoxicated women are usually willing to have sex) as well as the extent of the woman's resistance to rape (the extent of the woman's resistance should be the major factor in determining if a rape has occurred; a healthy woman can successfully resist a rapist if she really tries).

Conclusion

100% of the male students disagreed to the statement "in most cases when a woman was raped, she deserved it" but still illustrated victim blaming beliefs that coincide with the statements "proactively dressed women are asking for it" and "if she doesn't fight back, it's consensual".

Implications for Practice

- 1) Prevention Education needs to be strengthened to include strategies that focus on bystander education, men as allies, and the definitions of sexual assault, rape, and effective consent. Such prevention education models can provide potential support persons and victims with skills needed to prevent an assault from taking place. Bystander education and buddy system strategies should address scenarios involving men's roles in risk reduction.
- 2) Addressing victim blame and sexual assault stereotypes could be improved by adjusting in-class presentations and men against violence programming to highlight victim blaming beliefs. While all men agree that women do not deserve to be raped, they still believe women are "asking for it" when dressed in certain clothing, when a woman does not fight back during an assault, or when a woman is out alone at night. Reviewing CA penal code and "flight or flight" theory pertaining to rape will educate men that silence and not fighting back does not equal consent, but is a survival mechanism used by victims during the assault. Also reinforcing the fact that women should be able to travel alone at night without concern for their safety. Educating the campus community on how an individual's ideology can negatively or positively affect their ability to assist, respond, and refer a survivor of sexual assault to support services is crucial. If students are able to understand their own ideology and victim blaming tendencies, students can become better informed on the realities of sex crimes and how they can appropriately help others.