

Human Sexuality
December 2, 2009

Sexual Coercion and Abuse

Shocking statistics

- 4 out of 5 female Canadian undergraduates have been victims of violence in a dating situation (of these, 29% reported sexual assault)
- 60% of Canadian college aged males said that they would commit sexual assault if they were certain they would not get caught
- According to Stats Can, only 6-8% of all sexual assaults are reported to police
- Only 1% of all date rapes are reported to police

Shocking Statistics

- 31% of Canadian males and 22% of Canadian females believe that it is OK to coerce a woman into having sex.
 - e.g., “if a girl engages in necking or petting and she lets things get out of hand, it is her own fault if her partner forces sex on her”

Incidence

- 39% of women report having been sexually assaulted at some point in their lives since age 16 (Stats Canada)
- Approx 6-8% of these women report it to police
- Among men (US stats):
 - 1% report forced sex by a woman
 - 1.9% report forced sex by a man

Sexual assault

- *Any non-consensual sexual activity that can range from unwanted touching to forced intercourse to sexual violence or when the victim is incapable of giving consent*
- Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature generally falls under **Sexual Harassment**

Some examples

- A group of males outside the cafeteria are rating all females as they walk by
- A job promotion is conditional upon having sex with your boss
- A female university professor consistently puts down and ridicules men
- Mary is walking home from school and is forced to give a blow job to a stranger who held her at knife point.
- Dan and Jane are drinking heavily at a party. He suggests they have sex, she says no, but goes up to the bedroom with him anyways and they have sex.

Legal aspects

"Informed Consent" is at the heart of defining sexual assault

Definition

1. agreement must be expressed in words
2. individual must be capable of providing consent
3. Individual must not be counselled or incited/urged to engage in the activity through abuse of a position of trust, power, or authority
4. Individual must not express disagreement, either by words or conduct
5. If initially providing consent, the individual is still free to express lack of agreement to continue either via words or actions

Problems with this definition of "informed consent"

Many different factors shape your perception of consent:

- Cultural attitudes – culturally transmitted assumptions
- Cultural metaphors – "you are mine"
- Cultural myths – "if you reach orgasm during rape, you wanted it"
- Sexual scripts – "she dressed in a way that invited the assault"
- Historical messages – heterosexist, racist

3 levels of sexual assault distinguished by the Criminal Code of Canada

1. **Simple sexual assault** = forcing an individual to take part in any form of sexual activity without consent
2. **Sexual assault with a weapon** = more serious offence; actual use of a weapon, threatened use, or injury to a 3rd party
3. **Aggravated sexual assault** = victim is seriously wounded, maimed, beaten, or in danger of dying as a result of the sexual assault

Charges in sexual assault

- Must be proven beyond a reasonable doubt that:
 - The offence occurred
 - The accused person is the one who did the attack
 - Consent was not obtained
- Maximum sentence for
 - aggravated sexual assault: life in prison
 - Assault with a weapon: 14 years in prison
 - Indictable sexual assault: 10 years
 - Summary conviction offence: 6 mos jail + \$2000 fine

Other sexual offences

- Sexual Interference
- Invitation to Sexual Touching
- Sexual Exploitation
- Sexual Exploitation of a person with a disability
- Anal Intercourse
- Indecent acts

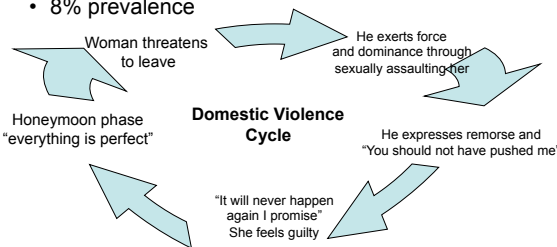
Criminal Code of Canada

Typical presentation of sexual assault

- Assault by known perpetrator is much more common than by a stranger
- Many women do not recognize assault if perpetrator was known, especially if it took place after "foreplay"
- Often related to perceived miscommunication
 - Especially by sexually aggressive men with "suspicious" schema

Spousal Sexual Assault

- Physical assault strongly correlated with sexual assault
- Many women do not report the abuse
- 8% prevalence



Why doesn't she leave?

Why doesn't she report it to police?

- Believe that the police could do nothing (50%)
- Concern about the attitudes of police and the courts towards sexual assault (44%)
- Fear of another assault by the perpetrator (33%)
- Fear and shame (64%)
- They may be revictimized by the justice system

Theories of sexual assault causation

- Victim precipitated → she dressed in a way that invited the assault
- Psychopathology of offender → his depression made him do it
- Socialization → our culture reinforces male aggression; use sex to demonstrate power OR use power over women to get sex
- Social disorganization → crime increases when social organization is disrupted

Date Rape Drugs

AKA: Drug-assisted sexual assault



GHB gamma hydroxybutyric acid



Rohypnol (flunitrazepam)



Ketamine (ketamine hydrochloride)

Date Rape Drugs

AKA: Drug-assisted sexual assault

- Street names: Rophy, Ruffles, Roofies, Ruffies, Ruff Up, Rib, Roach 2, R2, R2-Do-U, Roche, Rope, Ropies, Circles, Circes, Forget It, Forget-Me-pill, Mexican Valium, Special K
- Usually no observable signs of presence
- Act within 30 min; last up to 12 hours
- Typical effects: memory impairment, drowsiness, nausea, seizure, confusion, hallucinations, feeling out of control, death

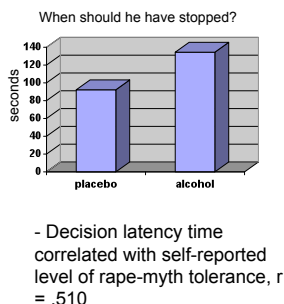
Date Rape drugs (cont.)

- Can be combined with Plan B (emergency contraceptive) → irregular bleeding a few days later
- Do not:
 - Accept drinks that are opened
 - Share drinks
 - Drink from punch bowls
 - Drink anything that tastes or smells strange
 - Urinate, bathe, douche, or change clothes if you think you received the drug
- Good news: manufacturer of rohypnol changed properties so that when mixed with light-coloured drink → turn bright blue

Alcohol and date rape

Loiselle, 2007:

- 42 women randomized to alcohol vs placebo group and given a story about a coercive sexual exchange



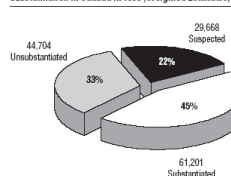
Child Sexual Assault

- Age of consent changed from 14 → 16 in 2008
- Close-in-age exception = allows someone 14-15 to have consensual sex with someone < 5 yrs older

Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA)



Figure S-1
Child Maltreatment Investigations by Level of Substantiation in Canada in 1998 (Weighted Estimates)



- Estimated 2.48 investigations of sexual abuse per 1,000 children
- Accurate prevalence data difficult to find
- 1983 & 1997 data:
 - 11-18% women and 4-8% men reported CSA

Consequences of sexual assault

- Is a period of crisis
- Distress peaks 3 weeks later and continues for a month
- Improvement begins after 3 months
- ++self-blame
- Effects on physical health:
 - Physical injuries, cuts and bruises, vaginal pain and bleeding, irritation and damage to throat, rectal bleeding, STI, pregnancy in 5% of cases
 - 2000 study; men had 5x risk of thyroid disease; women had 2x risk of breast cancer and arthritis

Effects of CSA on psychological function

- Significantly higher rates of anxiety and PTSD, depression, poor self-esteem, health problems, aggressive or antisocial behaviour, inappropriate sexual activity, school problems, behaviour problems
- May trigger early puberty
- Severe symptoms if:
 - perpetrator was family member
 - Sexual contact was frequent or prolonged
 - Abuse involved penetration

Consequences of Sexual Assault: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- PTSD diagnosed when (for 3+ months):

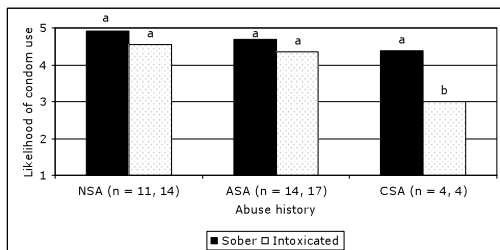
 1. **Persistent re-experiencing of the traumatic event** (e.g., flashbacks of rape, nightmares)
 2. **Avoidance of stimuli associated with the assault** (avoiding locations or activities)
 3. **Hyperarousal** (irritability, difficulty concentrating, hypersensitive startle)

 - Triggers everywhere
 - Assimilation of new information

Treatment of PTSD due to sexual assault

- **Prolonged Exposure** (behaviour therapy) = In-vivo exposure to the assault repeatedly until it no longer evokes anxiety or fear
- **Cognitive Processing Therapy** (cognitive therapy) = identifying and challenging the maladaptive thoughts since the assault (e.g., "all men are bad", "I cannot trust anyone")
- **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)** = imaginal exposure to the trauma while moving eyes back and forth
- ****all have equal efficacy. Cognitive therapy better at decreasing self-blame and guilt**

Effects of CSA on sexual decision making



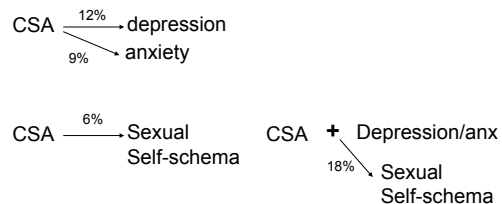
Does childhood sexual abuse affect adult sexual behaviour?

- Najman (2005) – CSA related to oversexualization (increased sexual frequency, more sexual partners, riskier sex, commercialized sex/prostitution)
- Controversial findings
- Sexual response?
 - Some studies suggest increased rates of sexual aversion, low desire, low arousal

Child sexual abuse, adult sexuality, and schemas in women

- Meston (2006) assessed sexual response (*desire, arousal, orgasm*), affect (*depression, anxiety*), negative sexual affect (*"when sexual, how often do you feel anger/fear"*), and sexual self-schema (*"do you see yourself as romantic, passionate, arousable, etc."*)
- 48 female child sexual abuse (CSA) survivors and 71 control participants

Does CSA predict affect and sexual self-schema?



The effects of CSA on sexual self-schema are mainly due to depression and anxiety

Does CSA predict sexual response?

CSA $\xrightarrow{11\%}$ Negative sexual affect (*anxiety, fear, and disgust during sexual activity*)

CSA + Dep/anx $\xrightarrow{19\%}$ Negative sexual affect


CSA + Dep/anx + Sexual Self-schema $\xrightarrow{30\%}$ Negative sexual affect

The effects of sexual self-schema on negative affect were stronger than effects of depression and anxiety

Meston (2006) conclusions


- Women with CSA are less able to view themselves as passionate and romantic because sexuality has become linked to negative affect

Mindfulness as a treatment for sexual abuse-associated sexual dysfunction



"the miracle by which we master and restore ourselves...it is the miracle which can call back in a flash our dispersed mind and restore it to wholeness so that we can live each minute of life"

(Thich Nhat Hanh, 1976)



Sexual Abuse History

