Reporting Patterns of Women of Color College Student Survivors of Sexual Assault: Results from a Multi-Institutional National Study

SCOPE CONFERENCE
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The literature suggests a lack of reporting by survivors for various reasons.

Based on national data obtained from over 11,000 college women, this study examines the reporting patterns of Women of Color student survivors of sexual assault.

Recognizing our privileged lenses, we offer an examination of the incidence of sexual assault among women students and identify differences in the reporting patterns between Women of Color and White Women.
Traditional college-aged women overrepresented amongst sexual assault survivors

Sexual violence most underreported crime

White Women overrepresented in sexual assault survey samples and research

White Women more likely to report sexual assault than Women of Color

2 Koss, 1992, Koss, Gidycz & Wisniewski, 1987; Sable, Danis, Mauzy, Gallagher, 2006
3 Bureau of Justice Special Report, 2003
No statistically significant difference in sexual assault prevalence between minority and nonminority women\(^1\)

- 19% of minority women report being raped at some time in their lives
- 18% of non-Hispanic White Women report being raped at some time in their lives

1 in 5 White Women report their sexual assault versus 1 in 15 Black Women\(^2\)

\(^1\) Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006
\(^2\) Bureau of Justice Special Report, 2003
Basis for the Project: Critical Theory

Critical Feminist Theory

- Historical context of women’s experiences
- Systems and barriers created by the dominant group
- Gender-based and intimate partner violence as forms of oppression
- Acknowledgement of intersections of identity

Critical Race Theory

- Institutionalized racism
- Use of “White” lens for comparative purposes rather than within Communities of Color
Explore the reporting patterns of Women of Color

Determine whether reporting patterns differ by racial identity

Inform prevention and response efforts
Lack of Literature on Communities of Color

- Lack of research on cultural differences within communities of color
- Aggregate data ignores ethnic-specific patterns, trends and significant data
- Gender often ignored within communities of color
- Broad, sweeping assumptions can misinform
Limited Literature on Reporting Patterns

Cultural barriers
- Representations in popular culture
- Stigma

Distrust of police

Language

Initial help-seeking behavior can effect subsequent care

No ethnic differences regarding sources to which women disclosed
- Informal sources more prevalent

(Shenoy et al., 2010; National College Women Sexual Victimization Survey)
Sample Description

Secondary data analysis from National Campus Climate Data\(^1\)

35 institutions – Faculty, staff, students (N = 28,701)

Women undergraduate students (n = 11,005)

\(^1\)NCCD, Rankin & Merson, forthcoming
• 625 (6%) of women undergraduate students responded “yes” to the following question:
  • Have you experienced unwanted physical sexual contact at XXXX?
Unwanted Physical Conduct (Sexual Assault):

Any sexual act directed against another person, forcibly, and/or with threat of force, and/or against that person’s will; or when the survivor is incapable of giving consent, (i.e., is unconscious, mentally incompetent, or intoxicated), including forcible rape, use of drugs to incapacitate, forcible sodomy, gang rape, sexual assault, sexual assault with an object, and forcible fondling.

Note: adapted from U.S. Department of Justice http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/sexassault.htm
“If Yes”...Series of follow-up questions:

- Who was the offender?
- Where did the incident(s) occur?
- Please indicate your response to experiencing the incident.
- If you did not report the incident to campus official or staff member, please explain why.
Methods – Data Analyses

Descriptive statistics across racial identity groups

To examine reporting patterns of student survivors of sexual assault on college campuses.

Chi-square analyses

To examine differences in reporting patterns based on racial identity.
Results – Sought Support from a Friend

- 419 of the total 625 women (67.0%) sought support from a friend
  - White, 344 of 503 (68.4%)
  - African American, 18 of 31 (58.1%)
  - Asian American, 12 of 26 (46.2%)
  - Latina, 7 of 18 (38.9%)
  - Other/multiracial, 38 of 47 (80.9%)

- Chi-square was significant ($x^2 = 17.191, p < .01$), indicating a significant difference in seeking friends’ support across racial groups
Results – Sought Medical Services

- 58 of the total 625 women (9.3%) sought medical services
  - White, 49 of 503 (9.7%)
  - African American, 0 of 31 (0.0%)
  - Asian American, 0 of 26 (0.0%)
  - Latina, 1 of 18 (5.6%)
  - Other/multiracial, 8 of 47 (17.0%)

- Chi-square was significant ($x^2 = 9.600$, $p<.05$) indicating significant differences among racial groups seeking medical services after sexual assaults
Results – Reported to Local Police

- 38 of the total 625 women (6.1%) reported the assault to local police
  - White, 32 of 503 (6.4%)
  - African American, 1 of 31 (3.2%)
  - Asian American, 0 of 26 (0.0%)
  - Latina, 0 of 18 (0.0%)
  - Other/multiracial, 5 of 47 (10.6%)

- Chi-square was not significant ($x^2 = 5.071,$) indicating no significant differences among racial groups reporting to local police
Results – Sought University Resources

- 72 of the total 625 women (11.5%) sought out university resources after their sexual assault
  - White, 60 of 503 (11.9%)
  - African American, 1 of 31 (3.2%)
  - Asian American, 4 of 26 (15.4%)
  - Latina, 1 of 18 (5.6%)
  - Other/multiracial, 6 of 47 (12.8%)

- Chi-square test for seeking university resources yielded a p-value of 0.516 ($\chi^2 = 3.255$), suggesting that no significant difference exists between women in different racial groups seeking university resources
Discussion

• Friends serve as the most utilized support for the majority of survivors
  • Impact on:
    • Empowering bystanders
    • How to respond to a disclosure of sexual assault
    • How to refer a survivor to resources
    • Self-care and secondary trauma
    • Issues of retaliation
Barriers to: seeking medical services, reporting to local police, seeking university resources

- Stereotyping
- Myths
- Intersection of institutionalized sexism and racism
- Cultural norms regarding family, religion, social worth, etc.

- Most sexual assaults involve a survivor and perpetrator of the same race, which can lead to internal or external pressure to avoid furthering negative racial stereotypes
- Impact on communities of color
Implications

- More research necessary, particularly larger samples of women of color survivors
- How to educate friends as the primary source of support
- How to improve trust and access for: medical services, police, and university resources
Implications

- Federal legislation
  - Title IX and Clery Act
    - Mandated reporting
  - Campus SaVE Act
    - 2014-2015 academic year implementation
    - Mandated prevention education for incoming students, faculty and staff
    - Focus on: primary prevention, ongoing campaigns, bystander intervention, definitions of consent
    - Required annual training of university officials
References

- American College Health Assessment (2010).
References

Questions..?
Thank you!

Michelle Issadore
SCOPE Executive Director
execdir@wearescope.edu

Laura Kovach
Director of the Women’s Center
Georgetown University
ljk23@georgetown.edu

Jason (Jay) Garvey
Assistant Professor, Higher Education
jason.c.garvey@gmail.com

Susan (Sue) Rankin
Rankin & Associates, Consulting
Penn State Associate Professor, Education Policy Studies (retired)
sxr2@psu.edu