Male Victims of Sexual Violence
Deconstructing Myths and Creating a Community of Healing

Zachary Ahmad-Kaloon
Male Victim Program Coordinator and Educator

The Problem

- Lara Stemple JD
- UCLA Law

- 12-month prevalence and incidence data on sexual victimization in 5 federal surveys conducted independently in 2010 through 2012
  - Bureau of Justice Statistics,
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
  - Federal Bureau of Investigation

“...federal surveys detect a high prevalence of sexual victimization among men—in many circumstances similar to the prevalence found among women”
The Problem

- Bryana French Ph.D 2014 study
- Examined sexual 284 diverse adolescent and emerging adult males in high school and college.
- Over 43% of men experienced sexual coercion
  - verbal coercion 31%
  - seduction coercion 26%
  - physical coercion 10%
  - substance coercion 7%
- Some racial considerations

95% of the respondents reported women as the perpetrator.

The Problem

Narratives:

Verbal Pressure
“A girl wanted me to do oral sex to her. And begged. But I didn’t want to do it.”

Manipulation
“If my girlfriend is sad about something whether it’s concerning me or not she pressures me into having sexual intercourse with her”

Physical Force
“… I was pushed into a bathroom by a girl and she started kissing me until I made her stop and explained that I didn’t like her like that…”

The Problem

Narratives:

Substance Abuse
“…Well she told me she could drink a ton and was giving me double shots to ‘see if I could keep up’. After a couple hours things got blurry and I woke up next to her.”

Sexual Seduction
… she asked to come in and use the phone because she lost her cell phone. I passed out, she stripped herself then me but I just rolled over and passed out again.”

Statutory Rape
“I was coerced into sleeping with an older woman because I was told it would make me a big boy. I was only 12 at the time…”
The Problem

Sexual Coercion:
"The use of physical force, harm, authority, blackmail, verbal persuasion, manipulation, pressure, or even alcohol or drugs used for the advancement of sexual behavior." (French 2014)

1 in 6

A 2005 study conducted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported that 16% of males were sexually abused by the age of 18.1

A 2003 national study of U.S. adults reported that 14.2% of men were sexually abused before the age of 18.2

Mythologies

Myths vs. Cultural Delusions

- How do these myths come to be?
- How are they harmful to male victims?
- How can we combat them?
Myth 1
“Boys and men can’t be victims”
• Instilled through masculine gender socialization
• Our society expects males to be able to protect themselves
• Successful men are depicted as never being vulnerable, either physically or emotionally
• This includes men in same sex relationships or abuse by women

Myth 2
“Most sexual abuse of boys is perpetrated by homosexual males”
• Studies about this question suggest that men who have sexually abused a boy most often identify as heterosexual
• Often are involved in adult heterosexual relationships at the time of abusive interaction
• A man who sexually abuses or exploits boys is not engaging in a homosexual interaction—any more than men who sexually abuse or exploit girls are engaging in heterosexual behavior

Myth 3
“If a boy or man experiences sexual arousal or orgasm from abuse, this means he was a willing participant or enjoyed it”
• Males can respond physically to stimulation (get an erection) even in traumatic or painful sexual situations.
• Many survivors feel guilt and shame because they experienced physical arousal while being abused.
• Physical (and visual or auditory) stimulation is likely to happen in a sexual situation.
• It does not mean that the person wanted the experience or understood what it meant at the time.
Myth 4

“Boys and men are less harmed by the abuse experience than girls”

- Studies show that long term effects are quite damaging for either sex.
- Males may be more damaged by society’s refusal or reluctance to accept their victimization.
- Resultant belief that they must “tough it out” in silence.

Myth 5

“Boys and men abused by males are or will become homosexual”

- Experts in the human sexuality field do not believe that premature sexual experiences play a significant role in late adolescent or adult sexual orientation.
- Many men and boys who have been abused by males erroneously believe that something about them sexually attracts males, and that this may mean they are homosexual or effeminate.

Myth 6

“Boys who are sexually abused will go on to sexually abuse others”

- Creates stigma for the person, that he is destined to become an offender.
  - Boys might be treated as potential perpetrators rather than victims who need help.
  - Research by Jane Gilgun, Judith Becker and John Hunter found a primary difference between perpetrators who were sexually abused and sexually abused males who never perpetrated.
  - Non-perpetrators disclosed about the abuse, and were believed and supported by significant people in their lives.
Myth 7

"If the perpetrator is female, the boy or man should consider himself fortunate"

- Premature or coerced sex, whether by a mother, aunt, older sister, teacher, baby-sitter etc, causes rage, depression or other problems in more negative circumstances
- Often viewed as 'relationship' or 'affair' if women perpetrator to young man
- To be used as a sexual object by a more powerful person, male or female, is always abusive and often damaging.

(Myths adapted from 1in6.org/men/myths/)

Bill Maher – Lucky Bastard Syndrome

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Abuse is a control issue
• Abusers believe they have the right to manipulate, control and humiliate another person, and this belief is not only held by some men but also by some women.

Many of the effects are the same
• Shame, fright, a loss of self-worth and confidence, feel isolated, guilt and confusion

Male victims of abuse have great difficulty defining it as such
• Partially due to the image our western society generally has of men

"At first, she discouraged me from seeing old friends, especially female friends. She threatened to use violence against them. For example 'If so and so visits here, I'll be putting a knife in her guts.'...

She would flirt with my friends, but then tell me that they were trying to seduce her behind my back. This left me feeling distrustful of my friends. Later on, I found out that she had been telling them that they shouldn't come round because I was insanely jealous. All this had the effect of damaging my social network."

"I told my colleagues that I had scratched myself during the night due to a change in washing powder – actually it was my wife who did it, but I couldn't tell them that."

Examples
Age of Consent

Felonious Sexual Assault (RSA 632-A:3) includes the offense often referred to as the "statutory rape law," which involves sexual penetration of a person between the ages of 13 and 16 when the age difference between the actor and the other person is 4 years or more.

The legal age of consent in New Hampshire is 16. It also applies when a person is in a position of authority over another and coerces that other person to engage in sexual contact with the actor or with him/herself in the actor’s presence.

Examples

Statute of Limitations

Criminal Statute – Delayed Tolling for Minor Victims: 16 + 22 years:

Sexual assault and related offenses, and incest, committed against a victim under age 18 may be prosecuted within 22 years of the victim’s 18th birthday.

Examples

Female Perpetration

• Teachers, babysitters, nannies, mothers, aunts etc
  ✓ Often labeled as ‘Bi-Polar’
  ✓ Often know relationship is wrong but view their 'relationship' as 'special'
  ✓ Disparities in punishments
  ✓ Differences in media coverage
Abbie Jane Swogger (PA)
Age: 28
Victim(s):
• several teens aged fourteen to fifteen
• numerous other illicit items,
  ✓ Alcohol
  ✓ Cannabis
  ✓ Open condom wrapper
• Later revelations in the case showed that Swogger had regularly engaged in sexual acts with young men as young as fourteen.
• These allegations included photos leaked online showing Swogger being groped by six underage boys while nude.

Charge: 39 charges relating to her illicit sexual behavior, including providing crack cocaine to some of her victims
Sentence: pled guilty to eleven of the thirty-nine charges
  • Received a three to six year sentence with an additional thirty-six years of probation, including lifelong registration as a sex offender

Traci Tapp (NJ)
Age: 26
Victim(s):
• Initiated a relationship with a fifteen year old student in 2003
• Previously involved in a long-term relationship with another underage student
• Several other students came forward with information stating they had sexual contact with the teacher.

Charge: A single misdemeanor charge of harassment by offensive touching
Sentence: No jail time and only a fine of $225

2009 Rolling Stone, "Sex, Lies and Phys Ed"

Megan Denman (CA)
Age: 30
Victim(s):
• Denman had a sexual relationship with a 16-year-old boy that began in the summer of 2011.
• In Denman’s case, she faced as long as 26 years in prison for a lengthy sexual relationship with a student.
• Charge: Three counts of unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor and other charges
Sentence: six months in prison and three years on probation but did not have to register as a sex offender
Debra Beasley LaFave (FL)

Age: 23

Victim(s): multiple sex encounters with a fourteen-year-old student throughout various locations in the school
  - Including: performing oral sex on the male student in her classroom
  - Having intercourse with him in a portable classroom located on the school campus

Charge: plead down to a less serious offenses; two counts of lewd and lascivious batter

Sentence: Served no jail time for the crimes in question, and as part of her sentence, LaFave registered as a sex offender, served three years in house arrest, and must serve seven years on probation

Mary Kay Letourneau (WA)

Age: 34

Victim(s): she began a relationship with a sixth grade student she had previously taught in second grade.

Charge: Rape of a minor

Sentence: Suspended sentence—leaving Letourneau on probation for her crimes.

However, Letourneau refused to avoid contact with the victim, who was still a minor at the time, and actually conceived the couple’s first child while in violation of her probation, which sent Letourneau to prison for seven and a half years.

Disparity?

- A Denver Post analysis of sentencing data provided by the Colorado Judicial Branch shows that of the 2,128 men convicted of sexual assault on a child by a person in a position of trust from 2006 through 2010, more than 50 percent were sent to prison.
  - Of the 79 women convicted of the same felony offense, 38 percent went to prison. A little more than 39 percent of female defendants in that same period were put on intensive supervised probation. Less than 35 percent of men were given the same sentence.

- Experts who have studied the issue say those statistics are mirrored nationwide and show a clear disparity between how male and female teachers, coaches and babysitters are treated when they are convicted of sexually abusing a child.

- How does the media cover this?
“This is well illustrated by some of the headlines: an article reporting U.S. teacher Mary Kay LeTourneau’s marriage to her former student, with whom she started a sexual relationship when the boy was twelve years of age and for whose rape she served a seven year sentence, is entitled ‘School lovers tie-knot’.

On the other hand, the article reporting Brisbane teacher Allan Thomas Walters’ sentencing to five years, suspended after thirteen months, for charges of indecent dealings against a boy who was thirteen years of age at the time of the offence, is entitled ‘More time for pervert.’

(Landor, Male vs. Female Sex Offenders in the Media)
Creating a Community of Healing

Male Centered Spaces

- The Men's Project is a collection of...
  - non-profit charitable men's counselling agencies
  - providing services to men and their families since 1997
- Is that the direction we need to be going?
- Can we adequately add on this population?
  - Pushback

What Can We Do?

- Commitment to serve statements
  - People 'finding themselves' in your website and literature
- Look at your programming/educational materials
  - Gendered language?
  - Implications of only a women's issue
- Expected results
- Pushback and misconceptions
Working With Male Survivors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of client</th>
<th>Possible responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• May have injuries, likely to be fearful and feel controlled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Many strategies are similar
- Advocacy is advocacy
- Understanding and knowledge is key

(www.mensadviceline.org.uk/)

Educating About Male Survivors

- Cultural Delusions
  - Practicing addressing the myths that don’t blame or create arguments
- Know you’re going to get questions
  - “How is that even possible?”
  - “What?”
  - Laughs/uncomfortability
- Use resources to help navigate conversation
- We have to talk about it because not many are

Resources – National

- 1in6 United States – 1in6.org
  - The mission of 1in6 is to help men who have had unwanted or abusive sexual experiences in childhood live healthier, happier lives
  - Offers
    - Outreach, education and services
    - In person and over the web
    - Professional trainings
Resources – National

- 1BlueString
  - National campaign asking guitarists to change 1 of their 6 guitar strings to blue
  - Represents the 1 in 6 men abused before age of 18
  - P’s letter

www.1bluestring.org

1in6 Men on Campus (MOC) National Task Force

- Identify the unique cultural barriers to college men
- Offer solutions
- Provide training
- Thought partnership with 1in6 and other campuses
- www.1in6.org

Resources (cont.)

Sexual Harassment & Rape Prevention Program (SHARPP)

- 24/7 Hotline: 862-7233 (SAFE)
- Walk-in sessions with advocates
- Confidential services
- Outreach and prevention programming
- www.unh.edu/SHARPP

Zachary Ahmad-Kahloon
Male Victim Program Coordinator
zachary.ahmad-kahloon@unh.edu
603-862-3494
Citations

