Preventing sexual violence by addressing rape culture

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Sarah McMahon, Ph.D.
Associate Director, Center on Violence Against Women & Children
Rutgers University School of Social Work
Objectives of presentation

• Identify a series of behaviors along the continuum of sexual violence
• Distinguish primary prevention from secondary and tertiary prevention
• Define “rape culture”
• Understand the role of gender norms, media, peer and institutional influences in supporting rape culture
• Define current approaches to the primary prevention of sexual violence including bystander intervention education, rape myth education, and media literacy
• Identify primary prevention resources, tools, and strategies that will be relevant to working with various populations
Tools from today’s presentation

- Basic introduction to the idea of rape culture
- Geared towards engaging groups in work around the primary prevention of sexual violence
- Interested in conversation and two-way learning/application
- Interactive exercises, video clips, and other tools will be demonstrated throughout today’s workshop
Why focus on prevention?

Primary Prevention
Continuum of sexual violence
Continuum of violence model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low end of behaviors</th>
<th>High end of behaviors</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Are more commonly accepted by society</td>
<td>• Generally considered sexually violent in our society</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Include sexually degrading language, rape jokes</td>
<td>• Include sexual assault, criminal sexual contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Are often normalized as part of our culture</td>
<td>• Are recognized as crimes in our culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Are not judged as harmful</td>
<td>• Often have legal ramifications and punishment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Are not easily viewed as connected to SV, not widely</td>
<td>• Are still often underreported and associated with high</td>
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<tr>
<td>recognized (Stout, 1991)</td>
<td>levels of victim blaming</td>
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McMahon, Hoffman & Johnson, 2013
Re-visioning the sexual violence continuum

Exercise: Continuum of harm
Rape culture
What is rape culture?

- A culture that allows sexual violence through:
  - Oppression and social inequality
  - Normalization of violence
  - Perpetuated rape myths
  - Victim blaming
  - Silence
- Implicit, not explicit
- Varies based on community, culture, and location
WHAT “RAPE CULTURE” MEANS

1 OUT OF 5 AMERICAN WOMEN HAS SURVIVED AN ATTEMPTED OR COMPLETED RAPE. BUT SURVIVORS ARE DOUBTED, SHAMED, AND HARASSED

Rape cases are not being reported...
ONLY A THIRD OF ALL RAPE CASES ARE ACTUALLY REPORTED

If a survivor does report, police might not investigate.
TENS OF THOUSANDS OF RAPE KITS ARE SITTING UNTESTED ACROSS THE U.S.

Prosecutors often refuse to take up cases that the police DO recommend.
FEWER THAN 4 IN 10 CASES ARE EVER PROSECUTED

If a rape case does go to trial, survivors are often re-traumatized by the process.
DEFENSE ATTORNEYS OFTEN BLAME AND SHAME SURVIVORS ON THE STAND

People think rape survivors are making it all up.
6% OR LESS OF CHARGES MAY BE FALSE, BUT STUDENTS THINK UP TO 50% OF RAPE REPORTS ARE FABRICATED

And even if a rapist is convicted, he can receive an extraordinarily light sentence.
ONLY 3% OF RAPISTS SPEND EVEN A DAY IN JAIL
Exercise: Examples of rape culture

What other examples of rape culture have you seen in your practice, workplace, community, or in society at large?
Elements of rape culture

- Rape Myths & Victim Blaming
- Media
- Gender & Sexuality Beliefs
- Peer influence
Elements of rape culture: rape myth beliefs
Rape myths fuel rape culture

• Formed from attitudes and beliefs surrounding sexual assault
• Often blame victims or trivialize the experience
• Create a false sense of safety by ignoring the realities of rape
• Have become more subtle over time
MYTH/FACT exercise

Myth: Most rapes (real rape) are committed by strangers.

• Written in character letter for Brock Turner:
  – “This is completely different from a woman getting kidnapped and raped as she is walking to her car in a parking lot. That is a rapist. These are not rapists. These are idiot boys and girls having too much to drink and not being aware of their surroundings and having clouded judgement.”

Fact: Most rapes are committed by someone known to the victim.

• 92% of female victims and 74% of male victims report their perpetrators as acquaintances or intimate partners (Black et al., 2011); as many as 93% of child sexual abuse survivors report their perpetrators as acquaintances (RAINN)
MYTH/FACT exercise

Myth: False claims of rape are common.
– Women “cry rape” for revenge, regret, or attention.

Comedian Bill Cosby, responding to a woman's allegations of sexual molestation, asserted: "I am not going to give in to people who try to exploit me because of my celebrity status."

Cosby On Those Groping Allegations

Fact: False reporting for sexual assaults is similar to other crimes.
– Research shows false reporting for sexual assault in the 2-10% range.

Examples of rape myths

Myth: Only women can be raped.

Fact: Sexual assault is experienced by people of all genders.

- 1 out of 10 rape victims are male (BJS, 2013).
- 1 in 2 transgender persons are sexually assaulted in their lifetime (Stotzer, 2009)
- Both male and female children experience sexual assault
Elements of rape culture: gender norms & beliefs about sexuality
Beliefs about gender and sexuality

**Individual**

- Sexist beliefs
- Negative attitudes about SV

Increased tolerance and perpetration of sexual violence

Berkowitz, 1992; Christopher, Madura, & Weaver, 1998; Lanier, 2001; Lyndon, White, & Kadlec, 2007

**Community**

- Higher levels of sexist beliefs
- Rigid adherence to gender roles

Increased rates of violence against women

Casey & Lindhorst, 2009
Beliefs about race, ethnicity & gender
Exercise: Gender box

- “Act like a man”
- “masculine”

- “Act like a lady”
- “feminine”

- What names are given to those not in these boxes?
- What happens to them?
Factors contributing to rape culture: media
Role of Media

Young people, particularly teenagers, spend up to eight hours a day interacting with some form of media (e.g. internet, television, video games, print)

National Coalition to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (2013). “Impact of Media & Technology on Youth”.

• How does media influence us?
• What is the power of images? Words?
• How does it impact the occurrence of violence?
Exercise: Music lyrics

“I hate these blurred lines
I know you want it
I know you want it
But you're a good girl
The way you grab me
Must wanna get nasty”
Media visibility

colonialism
mainstream sexism
media violence
invisibility
racism attitudes
dominant culture
Exercise: Deconstructing Media
Critical media literacy is an opportunity for individuals to challenge messages and norms, while also giving them a chance to create their own media messages that reflect their lived experience and hopes for the future.

Generation Justice is now New Mexico’s premiere, award-winning youth media project. GJ’s youth produce media that shifts narratives and raises the voices of communities of color and the “unheard” in our state.
Challenging gender norms in media

THE REPRESENTATION PROJECT

WE HAVE DISTRIBUTED MORE THAN 6,000 COPIES OF OUR MEDIA LITERACY CURRICULUM, WHICH TAKES OUR FILMS INTO CLASSROOMS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS WORLDWIDE
Elements of rape culture: peer influence
Peer influence on rape culture

- Peer groups that:

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<th>view sexual violence as having more social benefits than personal risk.</th>
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<td>Have strong masculine ideologies.</td>
<td>increased acceptance of rape-supportive attitudes and risk of perpetration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support or engage in sexual violence...</td>
<td>justify and normalize the continuance of sexually violent behavior.</td>
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Bystander intervention

Reactive bystander opportunities

- Primary prevention
- Secondary prevention
- Tertiary prevention

Proactive bystander opportunities

Exercise: What would you do?

1. You are at the dinner table and a family member makes a sexist (or racist, or homophobic) joke.

2. You walk by a parking lot and see a group of men around a woman who looks uncomfortable.

3. You are at work and hear a coworker make sexual comments and gestures towards another employee.

4. You are at a bar and see a friend of yours taking someone home with them who has clearly had too much to drink.

5. You are on social media and read comments from people talking about how some girl claimed she was raped but it was probably to get back at the guy.
Bystander intervention education programs
Best practices for prevention
Principles of effective prevention programs

1. Comprehensive
2. Varied Teaching Methods
3. Sufficient Dosage
4. Theory Driven
5. Positive Relationships
6. Appropriately Timed
7. Socio-culturally Relevant
8. Well-Trained Staff
9. Outcome Evaluation

Resources

- Bringing in the Bystander, UNH: [http://cola.unh.edu/prevention-innovations/bystander](http://cola.unh.edu/prevention-innovations/bystander)
- CDC Division of Violence Prevention: [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/)
- Green Dot, etc.: [https://www.livethegreendot.com/](https://www.livethegreendot.com/)
- Know Your Power, Prevention Innovations: [http://cultureofrespect.org/program/know-your-power/](http://cultureofrespect.org/program/know-your-power/)
- Media Literacy Project: [https://medialiteracyproject.org/index/](https://medialiteracyproject.org/index/)
Resources (continued)

- New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault: https://www.njcsa.org/
- PreventConnect: http://www.preventconnect.org/
- RU Center on Violence Against Women & Children: https://socialwork.rutgers.edu/centers/center-violence-against-women-and-children
- Rutgers SCREAM Theater: http://vpva.rutgers.edu/scream-theater-and-scream-athletes/what-is-scream-theater/
- Step UP! Bystander program: http://stepupprogram.org/
- The Gender Ads Project: http://www.genderads.com/
- The Representation Project: http://therepresentationproject.org/
Contact information

Sarah McMahon
Associate Professor
Associate Director
Center on Violence Against Women & Children
School of Social Work, Rutgers University
smcmahon@ssw.rutgers.edu
vawc.rutgers.edu
Thank you….

- Kerry Camerer, Research Assistant, Center on Violence Against Women and Children
- Dr. Karen Herman, Director of Sexual Assault Services New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, Inc.