Rape prevention education: Towards closing the gap between theory & practice

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Objectives

I. To discuss current scholarship on factors related to rape vulnerability & risk

II. To examine recent college based rape prevention education efforts (most published evaluations)

III. To identify possible future directions in rape prevention education & stakeholder opportunities for primary prevention partnerships
I. Vulnerability & Risk

- **Vulnerability:** A combination of societal, institutional, dyadic, & individual, level influences *thought to heighten a woman's risk for victimization*

- **Risk:** A combination of societal, institutional, dyadic, & individual, level influences *that lead to perpetration*
I. Vulnerability & Risk

- Research on vulnerability can be classified according to three overarching models:
  - (VC) Vulnerability-creating traumatic experiences model
  - (SP) The social-psychological characteristics model
  - (VE) The vulnerability-enhancing situation model
I. Vulnerability & Risk

■ Can we predict vulnerability?

- No evidence supports a link between attitude & personality characteristics & increased vulnerability to rape

- The relationship between alcohol/drug use and SA is complex
  • Abbey & Harnish, (1995)
  • Norris, Nurius, & Dimeff, (1996)
I. Vulnerability & Risk

Koss & Dinero (1989)

- Past victimization, multiple sexual partners, & sexual values fail to present a practical improvement over using random chance to predict victimization (19% vs. 15%).

- **Conclusion:** While a small subset of women (10%) can be classified based on the after affects of childhood Sexual Assault (SA), including influences on sexual values, drinking, & level of sexual activity appears to increase the risk of rape. SA is generally not predictable.
Points to Ponder…

- Can we help prevent rape perpetration by focusing on vulnerability factors?

- Can we help women to avoid rape by focusing on vulnerability factors?
I. Vulnerability & Risk

- Risk factors that have been studied at the:
  - Individual Level
  - Dyadic Level
  - Institutional Level
  - Societal Level
I. Vulnerability & Risk

- Majority of risk research based single factors

- When talking about risk important to look at the “Big Picture”

- Patterns of risk factors examined together may predict perpetration
I. Vulnerability & Risk

  - Two components
    - A man's stance towards sexual behavior
    - Hostile masculinity in supporting sexual aggression & influences human relationships

- Shaped by early life experiences, especially harsh formative experiences.
I. Vulnerability & Risk

- The Confluence model
  - Incorporates factors from societal to individual levels
  - Utilizes a developmental perspective focusing on factors that contribute to sexual & nonsexual aggression
  - Posits that the likelihood of a factor occurring depends on whether previous factors have occurred
  - Hypothesizes that when certain factors occur in combination perpetration is more likely than when only some factors occur
"I wish you would make up your mind, Mr. Dickens.
Was it the best of times or was it the worst of times?
It could scarcely have been both."
II. College Rape Prevention Education

- Most prevention education programs are not published

- A recent literature review yielded 16 articles focused on college based prevention education programs published between 1994 & 1999

- Programs were developed for
  - Mixed-sex audiences (8)
  - Men (5)
  - Women (3)
II. College Rape Prevention Education

Programs vary with respect to

- Length
  - 60 minutes to semester length

- Approach
  - Mixed sex, men only, women only
  - Lecture, theater, video, vignettes

- Content
  - Attitudes, empathy, knowledge, supportive behaviors
II. College Rape Prevention Education

- Evaluation results are reported along five broad categories
  - Attitudes
  - Behavioral intention
  - Behaviors (self reported & observed)
  - Knowledge
  - Incidence of self-reported victimization
II. College Rape Prevention Education

- Results
  - Mixed Sex Programs
  - Programs Targeting Men
  - Programs Targeting Women
II. College Rape Prevention Education

- Issues to consider

- Few published evaluations
  - What are the promising practices?

- Few longitudinal studies
  - Time, labor & $$$
  - Short term outcomes come easier & expedient

- Utility of mixed-sex programs
  - Mutually exclusive goals
III. Future Directions for Prevention

- When should we do prevention education?
  - Life span approach

- Where should interventions occur?
  - Important to develop partnerships in areas that have been avoided or underserved such as the juvenile justice system, alternative high schools, job training programs, junior colleges & programs for teen mothers
III. Future Directions for Prevention

Are there institutions we could be partnering with?

– With youth - other anti violence, & positive communication programs
– With teen & adults - Link drug, alcohol & tobacco programs with rape prevention education
III. Future Directions for Prevention

- Who should we target
  - Prevention efforts must be directed at men & informed by research on factors that place males at risk for perpetration
  - Work with women
    - Focus on Resistance
In Conclusion – What have we learned?

“If you were to boil your book down to a few words, what would be its message?”
Conclusions

- Women's behaviors are not causally related to rape

- Perpetration must be viewed as the product of many causal influences

- Factors related to the behavior of perpetrators must be used to inform prevention efforts
Conclusions

- Important to create partnerships to present rape prevention & avoidance training in new contexts.

- Important to validate how much work has been done

- It is only through previous efforts that future efforts are possible.
How did I do?

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Selected works:


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