**Soc 3290 Deviance**

  **Overheads Lecture 21: Sexual Assault 1**

\* *Today* we look at:

 (1) General patterns & characteristics of sexual assault

 (2) The consequences of sexual assault

\* *Next class*:

 (1) Cultural factors

 (2) Theories of sexual assault

 (3) Male victims

 (4) Child molestation

 **Patterns & Characteristics of Sexual Assault:**

\* Demographic patterns:

 (1) *Sex*: -victims overwhelmingly female

 -offenders overwhelmingly male

 (2) *Age*: -victims young (youth /18-24 bracket)

 -offenders slightly older than victims

 (except in child molestation)

 (3) *Marital Status*:

 -victims often unmarried/common-law

 -offenders most often single (but a

 significant % are married, common-

 law, separated, or divorced)

 (4) *Socioeconomic Status:*

 - victims often low-income

 - offenders: all strata: loss of job/income key

 (5) *Race/Ethnicity*:

 - no Canadian Stats

 - U.S. Stats show both victims &

 offenders likely to be minorities

 - sexual assault becoming a bit less

 intra-racial over time

\* Offence characteristics:

 - sexual assault usually premeditated

 - most victims don’t resist

 - most victims know their attackers

 - most occur in private residences

 - weapons rarely used

 - alcohol consumption a factor

 - more offences occur on weekends/at

 times when social interaction increases

\* Planning & execution:

 - when offender knows victim: use of sweet talk, romantic moves,

 alcohol, etc as inducements, then “not taking no for an answer”

 - stranger assaults: picking an apparently vulnerable target,

 “testing” her in an innocuous situation, then intimidating into

 submission (usually verbally at first, but later physically)

\* Gang sexual assault:

 - most often involve lower-class adolescents / gangs

 - also occur on college campuses / providing intoxicants first

 - explanations: psychiatrists: “latent homosexuality” ???

 sociologists: social pressure/proving masculinity

\* Acquaintance sexual assault:

 - more likely to use verbal/psychological coercion than strangers

 - less likely to use weapons

 - more likely to premeditate sex, not necessarily assault

 - acquaintance sexual assault common

 - an extension of, not a departure from, conventional male sexual

 behavior

 - many offenders & victims wouldn’t consider what happened

 to be sexual assault

\* Campus sexual assault:

 - sexual assault particularly prevalent on campuses (despite

 often differing definitions of parties)

 - reflects culturally valued male behavior

- Sanday: “sexual assault free” vs. “sexual assault prone”

 campuses distinguished by seriousness of punishment, degree of

 heavy drinking, viewing women as sex objects vs. equals, &

 level of homophobia, etc.

 - Martin & Hummer: student group solidarity, norms of

 masculinity, drinking & group pressure lead to campus sexual

 assault

 - Schwartz & Nogrady: fraternities not worse than other college

 men, but athletes more assault prone

 - More research needed

\* The myth of victim-precipitation:

 - Amir: 19% of sexual assaults in Philadelphia were “victim

 precipitated” (i.e. either consent retracted, victim behaved in way

 that offender “interpreted” as consent, or “didn’t resist strongly”)

 - blames the victim/ reflects biased, male centered view

 - Kanin: victim precipitation inapplicable to sexual assault,

 though victims may willingly engage in behaviors leading up to it

 - still blames victim: victim only contributes to pre-assault

 intimacy/stops the moment force is used

 - many men don’t recognize distinction: surveys show many

 men/youth view it as acceptable to press on when woman

 changes her mind

  **Consequences of sexual assault**:

\* The response to sexual assault varies from victim to victim:

 - some show little concern

 - others are deeply traumatized for a long time

 - most initially experience shock, disbelief, anger, anxiety or

 depression, but are able to cope in time

\* Severity of reaction related to degree of violence, age of victim, social class, cultural background, prior sexual experience, other recent, major life changes, & social support

\* Victims of stranger assault often have serious depression & develop interpersonal problems

\* Victims of acquaintance assault suffer more from self-blame/ distrust men more as earlier trust violated

\* Most victims go through 2 phases of disorganization before coping:

 - acute phase: extreme fear, shock, humiliation, embarrassment,

 self-blame or anxiety

 - lingering phase: variety of phobic reactions

\* Overall: victims have increased risk of divorce, low income & unemployment

\* Inward vs. outward directed feelings: active, angry, outward directed survivors cope better (as do those who resisted assault)

\* Political activism /provision of services by women’s organizations has grown since the 1970's

 **The feeling of being assaulted again:**

\* 1960's & 70's horror stories about police insensitivity to victims “like a second sexual assault” (questioning of victims is more sensitive now, but still problematic)

\* Courtroom experiences involve yet another assault: the defense traditionally dredges up victims’ past sexual history

\* “Rape shield laws” to combat this are a legal football: continue to be challenged under accused’s “right to a fair trial” & “relevance”

  **Conclusion:**

\* Today we have looked at patterns & consequences of sexual assault

\* We will continue next class by looking at cultural factors, theories of sexual assault, male victims, & child molestation