

Using Current Theory on the Causes of Rape to Inform Prevention Efforts

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Workshop Goals

- Present a short review of historical information related to the status of women.
- Briefly examine current research findings on risk factors for victimization.
- Review current theory on the causes of rape at the Societal, Institutional, Dyadic, Individual, and Multifactorial levels.
- Discuss the tailoring of prevention efforts based on the level of theory used and resources available.
- Conduct a small group activity designed to utilize theories to develop an intervention.

Historical Review

- Lack of independent legal status
- The rise of the child protective movement
- Social Casework vs. Criminal Justice

Current Research Focus

- Research on causes has centered around two areas
- Vulnerability to victimization
- Characteristics influencing the behavior of offenders.

Risk Factors for Victimization

- Researchers have asked why a particular woman is a target of sexual violence.
- Factors linked to a woman's likelihood of being raped include.
 - Passivity,
 - Hostility,
 - Low self esteem,
 - Alcohol and drug use,
 - Differences in education, or income
 - The use of violence toward children,
 - Violence in the family of origin.
- The main problem is that these risk factors were assessed postvictimization and assumed to correlate with the women's previctimization state.
- Some researchers found that alcoholic women are more likely to report violence in their relationships but this finding disappears when reviewed in the light of their partners alcohol problems (Miller 1992).
- After a critical review of 52 studies conducted over 15 years Hotaling & Sugarman (1986) found that the only consistent risk factor associated with being a victim of sexual abuse was having witnessed parental violence as a child. And the finding extended to their male assailants.

- Researchers have also examined personality traits and attitudes that could increase vulnerability to rape.
- This line of research has met with several problems.
- Recent studies found no specific characteristics that would make certain women more susceptible to violence than others (Pittman & Taylor, 1992).

Causes of Rape

- Societal Level
 - Sexual Scripts
 - Cultural Mores
- Institutional Level
 - Family
 - Schools
 - Religion
 - Media
- Dyadic Level
 - A man carries out violence against a woman in a context that includes:
 - Features of the relationship
 - Style of their communication
 - Characteristics of the man
 - Characteristics of the women
- Individual Level
 - Sex and Power Motives
 - Attitudes and Gender Schemas
 - Social Learning
 - Psychopathology and Personality Traits
 - Alcohol
- Multifactorial Models
 - It is widely accepted that multiple classes of influences impact the expression of sexually aggressive behavior in men (some of these classes of influence are more amenable to change than others).

Tailoring Prevention Efforts

- There are some basic questions that need to be considered before developing and implementing (or revising) a prevention program.
- Who do you want to reach?
- What should you know about the group you want to reach before you develop (or revise) your prevention program?
- What theory (or theories) are you going to use?
- What should the group you want to reach learn as a result of your prevention effort?
- How will you present this message?
- Where will you present this message?
- When will you present your message?
- How will you know that your message was effective?