

Dynamics of Sexual Assault

<i>Instructor:</i>	Law Enforcement or Advocate
<i>Time Needed:</i>	2 hours and 30 minutes with one 10-minute break
<i>Resources Needed:</i>	Handouts for volunteers #1 and #2 Self-test on sexual assault dynamics (optional) Flip chart for front of classroom Flip charts or notepads for groups of 4-6

Task 1 Recognize the importance of cultural myths and misconceptions regarding sexual assault.

Presentation: Brief lecture
Time: 10 minutes
Materials: Handouts for volunteer #1 and #2

During a class break get two volunteers from the class to read the quotes presented on the overhead (handouts are provided for the volunteers only). Give the volunteers their assigned quote ahead of time so they can familiarize themselves with it before reading it in front of the group. Use an overhead projector to allow all participants to follow along with the two quotes.

First, have one volunteer read the first quote and ask participants to think to themselves when it was likely written. Take guesses from participants on the year this quote was written, and after generating guesses, inform them that it appeared in 1970 in O'Hara's classic book entitled *Fundamentals of Criminal Investigation*.

Have the second volunteer read the second quote and again ask participants to think to themselves when it was likely written. After generating guesses on the year this second quote was written, inform participants that it appeared in an IACP publication as recently as 1995 (*insert citation*).

Clearly, "the more things change the more they stay the same." Much of the thinking about sexual assault has not changed in the last 20-30 years, because this thinking continues to reflect a number of myths and misconceptions.

Subtask 1.1 Discuss some of the cultural stereotypes regarding "real rape."

Presentation: Sentence completion

Time: 15 minutes

Some of the popular myths and misconceptions about sexual assault are reflected in the two quotes read by the volunteers. These assumptions express characteristics that are commonly thought to differentiate "real rape" from cases that are somehow suspected of being false. In other words, "real rape" is the stereotype that our culture has for what constitutes a legitimate sexual assault.

"Real rape," in the minds of many people, is perpetrated by a stranger who jumps from the bushes with a knife in his hand and attacks a woman who is seen by everyone as being completely innocent. Have participants come up with some of the other myths and misconceptions surrounding this topic. Have the group volunteer other characteristics of "real rape," and write these on a flip chart at the front of the room. Possible responses include the ideas that real rape:

- ...is perpetrated by a stranger
- ...involves a great deal of physical violence.
- ...leaves obvious signs of physical injury.
- ...involves the use of a weapon
- ...causes the victim to be hysterical.
- ...is reported immediately to police.
- ...is committed at night, in a dark alley, etc.
- ...takes place "on the bad side of town."
- ...is more likely to be committed by Black men.
- ...is more likely to involve White victims.
- ...cannot be perpetrated against a prostitute.
- ...involves only penile-vaginal penetration.

Offer suggestions if participants do not come up with these primary examples.

Subtask 1.2 Determine whether the stereotype of "real rape" resembles most cases handled by law enforcement.

Presentation: Classroom polling

Time: 10 minutes

Materials: Flip chart responses from previous exercise

Now, find out from participants how well the stereotype of “real rape” fits with the types of cases that they typically handle. First, ask participants to think of the most recent case of adult sexual assault that they handled. Give them a moment to think of the case and its characteristics. Then, read back each of the characteristics of stereotypic “real rape” generated by the group, and ask participants to raise their hand if this characteristic was true in their most recent case.

Chances are only a minority of participants will raise their hand for each characteristic. In this case, note that the stereotypic rape does not reflect a majority of sexual assault cases handled by participants. If, however, a large number of participants do raise their hands for the characteristics, discuss how victims are more likely to report their assault if it resembles the stereotypic “real rape.” The cases reported to police would thus not be representative of the assaults that actually occurred.

Subtask 1.3 Explore reasons for the widespread acceptance of myths and misconceptions regarding sexual assault.

Presentation: Group discussion
Time: 15 minutes

Ask participants why police and the rest of society tend to hold these myths and misconceptions regarding sexual assault. Possible responses include:

- Because the stereotype used to more accurately reflect the characteristics of reported rape.
- Because the media portrays stereotypic cases.
- Because we prefer to keep the issues “black and white.”
- Because we want to feel safe from threat of rape.

Allow time to discuss these ideas and others generated by the class. If the instructor can compile examples of stereotypic presentations in the media, this would be a great addition to classroom discussion.

Subtask 1.4 Identify potential consequences of the myths and misconceptions.

Presentation: Brief lecture
Time: 15 minutes

Task 2 Recognize the actual characteristics of sexual assault, and highlight the contrast with cultural stereotypes of "real rape."

Presentation: Brief lecture
 Optional self-test exercise
Time: 45 minutes

Optional self-test exercise (probably best for patrol):

Administer the self-test on sexual assault dynamics to participants and ask them to take it silently. Inform participants that although the correct answers will be discussed, no one will see their individual responses. Once they have completed the self-test, ask them to correct themselves as you walk through the lecture on actual characteristics of sexual assault as reported in recent research. This exercise may be especially useful for instructors who do not have access to local statistics and are basing their presentation on the national research described in the training manual.

Alternatively, if the instructor is presenting local statistics compiled personally, it may be useful to develop a similar self-test to correspond with the information to be presented.

Task 3 Discuss the ways in which law enforcement can effectively investigate sexual assault cases, given their actual dynamics.

Presentation: Small group discussion
Time: 30 minutes
Materials: Notepads or flip charts for each group

Assign participants to groups of 4-6 and inform them that they will have 15 minutes in which to generate 3 ways that police can effectively address the actual dynamics of sexual assault cases. Make sure that participants first state the actual characteristic of sexual assault cases, and then discuss ways in which law enforcement might address this issue.

For example, one characteristic of most sexual assaults is that the victim and suspect know each other. Police can effectively investigate these cases by anticipating a consent defense and focusing on identifying and collecting evidence to establish force or threat, rather than identification.

After 15 minutes, ask a volunteer for each group to report their group's responses, adding an idea only if it has not already been mentioned. This discussion should take approximately 15 minutes.

Handout for Volunteer #1

Thank you for your willingness to read this quote in front of the class. Take a moment to familiarize yourself with the quote, and you will be asked to read this first.

Where a vigorous woman alleges ravishment it is to be expected that signs of violence such as wounds, bruises and scratches will be present and their absence should induce a moderate degree of skepticism unless the girl avers that she fainted from fear, became panic stricken or was otherwise rendered incapable of physical resistance. The acts and demeanor of the female immediately after the alleged commission should be subjected to very critical investigation in these cases.

Handout for Volunteer #2

Thank you for your willingness to read this quote in front of the class. Take a moment to familiarize yourself with the quote, and you will be asked to read this second.

Generally, the actions and the appearance of a legitimate rape victim leave little doubt that a crime has been committed. Under such circumstances, the victim is highly agitated, emotionally distraught, often in a state of hysteria and may have sustained injuries, cuts, bruises or wounds. The victim's clothing is often ripped or torn off as evidence that it was forcibly removed and if the rape occurred outdoors, the victim is generally thrown to the ground and her outer garments stained or soiled.

Self-Test: Sexual Assault Dynamics (Answers)

Please take the following quiz silently and by yourself. Although we will discuss the correct answers in class, no one will score – or even see -- your responses.

1. About how many American women experience rape or attempted rape during their lifetime?
(a) 1 out of 2
(b) 1 out of 6
(c) 1 out of 10
(d) 1 out of 25

2. About how many American men experience rape or attempted rape during their lifetime?
(a) 1 out of 7
(b) 1 out of 21
(c) 1 out of 33
(d) 1 out of 57

3. Approximately what percentage of female rape victims are assaulted by a stranger?
(a) 17%
(b) 28%
(c) 60%
(d) 86%

4. Approximately what percentage of female rape victims are assaulted by a male perpetrator?
(a) 42%
(b) 67%
(c) 86%
(d) 100%

5. Most rapes result in physical injury.
(a) True
(b) False

6. Women are almost never raped more than once during their lifetime.
(a) True
(b) False

7. Over one-third of rape victims report fearing serious injury or death as a result of the assault.
(a) True (b) False

8. Most sexual assault victims report the crime to police.
(a) True (b) **False**

9. Most sexual assaults involve alcohol or drug use.
(a) True (b) False

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