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### Dating Violence in College

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## Domestic Violence on College Campuses

### **Introduction**

When young men and women go to college, there is an excitement for all things new. New friends, new class style, and new experiences galore! But unfortunately, those “new experiences” may not all be positive. Many young men and women also are experimenting alcohol and harder partying now versus when they were in high school. Unfortunately, this has been the predecessor for worse things to happen, such as sexual assaults. In the United States, one in four women or about 25% will experience sexual violence while they are in college. This can include, but is not limited to, sexual assault, rape, dating violence, intimate partner violence, and stalking (RAINN). But the real question is why has this issue become so prevalent on college campuses specifically? It is a large issue at hand otherwise, but has proven to be a substantially growing problem on campuses around the nation. Over the course of the semester, I looked into research regarding dating violence comparatively on and off of college campuses, and the research I came to find was definitely intriguing to say the least. Domestic violence on and off college campuses has become a substantial issue, and the following research shows just that.

### **Scope of the Problem**

Unfortunately, according to RAINN, or the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, the vast majority of sexual assaults go unreported and unpunished. Nearly 70% of victims do not inform the police and only about 25% of assaults eventually result in an arrest. There are many factors that may lead a woman to not report, but the biggest reasons of this are that many have distrust of authorities, fear of blame on themselves, or fear that they may not be believed. The fear that they may not be believed typically stems from the fact that many women who are sexually assaulted by someone they know, typically such as a classmate, significant other, family member, or teacher. They fear that they could be ostracized for this occurrence, because many might think “that person would never do that” and not believe them or they will likely have to further interact with their assailant because of the relationship that they may have with them (Realities of Sexual Assault). Most victims, according to RAINN, know their attacker, which is why most incidents of sexual assault occur in the victims’ homes, or in the case of college dating violence, their dorms, which is supposed to be a place of comfort, but these statistics have proven otherwise (RAINN).

Looking more generally, when looked at on average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by their partner within the United States. This can equate to more than 10 million people within the United States. On a typical day, there are also more than 20,000 phone calls placed to domestic violence hotlines nationwide (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence). According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, about 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have been victims of physical violence by an intimate partner within their lifetime, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have been victims of severe physical violence by an

intimate partner within their lifetime, and 1 in 7 women and 1 in 18 men have been stalked by an intimate partner during their lifetime where they were to the point of fearing that they or someone that they knew or were close with would be physically harmed or killed within an altercation by that person (National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey).

Domestic violence can also cause issues outside of a relationship that someone has with a specific person. It can also begin to affect a victim's life economically, physically, and mentally. On the economic side, according to a study done within the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, on average victims lose a total of about 8 million days of paid work each year. This study also shows that between 21-60% of victims end up losing their jobs because of reasons that stemmed from the abuse, and between 2003 and 2008, 142 women were murdered in their workplace by their abuser.

When looked at on the physical and mental impact that the abuse has on victims, a study that was conducted by the World Health Organization titled "Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence" looked into this part of the issue in depth. They came up with many different astounding findings as well. They found that there is a correlation between intimate partner violence and depression/suicidal behaviors. They also found that many women that are abused by their partners have a better chance as to contracting sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV or other STD's due to the forced intercourse or the prolonged exposure to stressful situations that they are put into (Global and regional estimates of violence against women). A quote taken from that National Coalition Against Domestic Violence also states:

Physical, mental, and sexual and reproductive health effects have been linked with intimate partner violence including adolescent pregnancy, unintended pregnancy in general, miscarriage, stillbirth, intrauterine hemorrhage, nutritional deficiency, abdominal pain and other gastrointestinal problems, neurological disorders, chronic pain, disability, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as well as noncommunicable diseases such as hypertension, cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Victims of domestic violence are also at higher risk for developing addictions to alcohol, tobacco, or drugs (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence).

This then goes to show that there are many outside effects when it comes to abuse, which can and will lead to downfalls elsewhere in the victim's lives.

When looked at more closely, you can even take a look at our own state of Pennsylvania's take on the domestic violence issue that is at hand. The Centers for Disease and Prevention did multiple studies over the course of the past few years, and came to also find many shocking facts. One of the most shocking things that I had come across that in the year of 2014 alone, about 2,500 victims/survivors were served by Pennsylvania domestic violence programs, but there was over 250 requests for domestic violence help that were left unmet. These are 250 people that reached out with their cry for help, and did not get any or enough to meet their demands. In our city of Philadelphia alone, there have been approximately 17.3% of students that have been physically hurt by a significant other within the past year, which is almost twice the national average. Also, on top of the physical abuse that might occur, stalking is another big issue within the state of Pennsylvania. About 19.11% of Pennsylvania women will experience

some sort of stalking within their lifetimes, which is a huge number to think about (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

### **Domestic Violence on College Campuses**

Research has shown that college women are among the highest demographic that is at risk for partner violence. When looked at on college campuses, many just look at sexual assault to be what is characterized as domestic violence, but there is so much more that is included within the definition of domestic violence. About 6 in 1,000 students will be sexually assaulted during their time within college, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Unfortunately though, only about 20 percent of sexual assaults get reported, which means that this leaves the vast majority, or 80 percent, that go unreported (Domestic Violence Shelters).

In 2007, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence conducted a study regarding specifically college students when it came to domestic violence. They reported that about 53% of victims of domestic violence had stemmed from a current or former partner, and about 21% of college students have reported experiencing dating violence by their current partner; while about 32% claim to have experienced it with a previous partner. By the college students that have been sexually assaulted, 35% claimed to have had an attempted rape occur on their dates, 22% of these threatened rapes even occurred while they were on their dates, and 12% of completed rapes actually ended up occurring while they were on their dates, which is a substantial number. Unfortunately too, the vast majority of victims of sexual assault that occur on college campuses know their perpetrator, relatively 90% to be precise and about 60% of the time, rapes occur within a casual or steady dating relationship. These numbers have grown within the past few

years as well, which leads to the fact that this definitely an on going issue (Dating and Domestic Violence on College Campuses).

Because this issue has been shown to be more prevalent within the media today as a really large issue at hand within universities around the nation, many college campuses now offer counseling and support services for students who are victims of domestic violence. Some universities even now have partnerships with local domestic violence shelters. For example, the University of Minnesota has partnered with the Aurora Center for Advocacy and Education to be able to provide a safe space for their students who are victims, or people that are concerned that they may become victims of domestic violence (Domestic Shelters).

However though even with these many resources that are available, students still face trouble sometimes in accessing them. Some students may feel that they are trapped within their social networks within the university and by reporting the issue at hand would put a certain stigma on them to be viewed a certain way around campus, especially students that attend smaller universities or colleges. Students have also reported that they feel that people within their university's administration truly understand the scope of the problem, such as when a student may confide in a professor that they trust. When it comes to adults as well, many students also fear that if they report the issue at hand for themselves that their parents might find out and take the student out of the school. However among these issues, and the many others one of the biggest issues is that students have a fear of the assailant. They may fear that the assailant will come back to hurt them even more after they reported them, or even a worry that the assailant may stalk them whether it be following them around campus in person, or through social media

networking sites to see what they are doing (Dating and Domestic Violence on College Campuses).

There are many other issues that occur within students on college campuses dealing with domestic violence as well. One other large issue at hand is that some students truly are unaware that they are being abused. According to the Teen Dating Abuse Report, conducted by Tru Insight in 2009 for Fifth & Pacific Companies and Family Violence Prevention Fund, about 70% of these college-aged students do not realize it. On the other hand though too, about 52% of college students state that they know someone being abused, but many do not intervene. This is because they fear that it would only make matters worse, it is not their business, they will hurt their relationship with the victim, or that they may know the abuser themselves and they might do something to them if they report it (Domestic Shelters).

### **Quantitative and Qualitative Studies on the Issue**

The first journal article that I looked at was titled *An Evaluation of Two Dating Violence Prevention Programs on a College Campus*. The purpose of this study was “to compare the effectiveness of a 90 minute bystander education program for dating violence prevention with a traditional dating violence awareness education program, as well as to a no education control group in changing attitudes, beliefs, perceived efficacy, intentions, and self-reported behaviors in college students” (Peterson et al.). Through this, they had multiple hypotheses. They first hypothesized that participants who were in the bystander education group would get higher scores on bystander effectiveness and have more of an intention to help, while having lower scores on rape myth acceptance and gender violence acceptance than those in the traditional



awareness education group from the pre-test to the immediate post-intervention post-test. They secondly hypothesized that these results would remain the same when tested again at the two-month follow up. The third hypothesis was that they had looked at if gender and personal victimization history will affect outcome measures. The fourth and final hypothesis was that the participants in the bystander education group and the traditional awareness group will score higher on bystander effectiveness, intention to help and self-reported bystander behaviors while having lower scores on rape myth acceptance and gender violence acceptance than the participants who received no education at the two month follow up.

There were different methods as to how the researchers had set up this study. Within the traditional awareness education program group, they covered the “nature and dynamics of dating violence, stalking, sexual assault, and consent (Peterson et al., 2016)” within a 90-minute program. The bystander awareness program had focused more so on the traditional victim versus perpetrator approach to dating violence education, and they did not include any bystander content. This program was adapted from the program *Bringing in the Bystander* 90-minute program. The bystander awareness program “focused on how all students are affected by violence and how all students can play a role in preventing it both at the individual level and at the community level” (Peterson et al., 2016). They had taught participants what seemed to be an easy remembrance tool, known as the “three D” approach, which stands for direct, delegate, and distract responses, while also teaching participants how they can listen, believe, and be empowered to assist when needed to step in. A pair of one male and one female instructor presented both education programs and the programs consisted of a combination of lecture PowerPoint, video clips, interactive scenarios, group discussion, and questions/answers.

The sample of students used for this study was freshmen from a public university in the Rocky Mountain West during the fall semester of 2013. They had invited all of the freshman seminar classes to participate within the study, since at the time of the study, about 95% of the freshman class was enrolled in one of the freshman seminar classes. Six of the classes chose not to participate at all, five of the classes participated in the research component with no education, and the remaining eighteen classes received education and participated in the research. The randomization as to whether or not the students were to be in the bystander or traditional awareness program occurred within each class. Students were asked to draw a marble from a bag that was passed around each of their individual classrooms that comprised of an equal amount of red and blue marbles. Students who drew a red marble participated in the traditional awareness program while students who drew a blue marble participated in the bystander education program. Overall, there were fourteen traditional awareness education programs and fourteen bystander education programs (Peterson et al.).

This study conducted was a quantitative study. This is because the design of the study included a pre-test/post-test immediately, as well as a two-month post-intervention follow-up. The results for hypothesis one was that when looking at the results, the bystander group and the traditional education programs showed significant changes in all outcome measures from pre-test to post-test. However, overall the bystander group showed a greater improvement compared to the traditional group. Overall, with the education that was done, it has been shown here that the improvements from the pre-test to the post-test indicate that there is a willingness for people to intervene within future situations (Peterson et al.). For hypothesis two, the researchers wanted to

conduct a two-month follow up to determine if the results would prove to be similar as to when the study was done immediately after the education programs. Overall, again, there was a significant improvement of scores from pre-test to 2-month post-test, however, both bystander and traditional awareness education groups did show evidence of decay from the immediate post-test scores. The bystander group had more improvements overall than the traditional awareness group on all outcome measures (Peterson et al.). For the third hypothesis, according to the tests done, the education had been suggested to work equally for both men and women, and gender does not seem to have been a factor in affecting the education and outcome measures. The educational programs had also worked equally well for participants who reported victimization of abuse compared with those who did not report abuse victimization, whether it had been partner abuse or sexual abuse. So this then also suggests that neither partner abuse nor sexual abuse affected the relationship between the education and outcome measures (Peterson et al.). For the fourth hypothesis, overall, for all measures the group the received no education scored worse on the pre and post-tests that received dating violence prevention education. Also, rape myth acceptance increased over time while bystander efficacy decreased over time for the control group (Peterson et al.). So to summarize the findings, both the bystander groups and traditional awareness groups showed positive changes in outcome measures overall, even though there was a slight decay from the immediate post-test to the two-month follow up post-test. This suggests that if people are able to participate in dating violence prevention programs, this can be helpful in “changing attitudes, beliefs, efficacy, bystander intentions, and bystander behaviors in college students” (Peterson et al.).

The second article that I had chosen was *Women's Behavioral Responses to the Threat of a Hypothetical Rape Stimulus: A Qualitative Study*. The purpose of this study was “to explore qualitative themes in women’s intended behavioral responses to a hypothetical sexual assault threat, date rape, by using a laboratory-controlled threat” (Anderson et al.). Participants were to articulate as to how they would respond if the situation were a real threat. The hypothesis made by the researchers conducting this study was that because of research done in the past, they were to believe that by further exploring behavioral responses, they could measure evaluate, and target different strategies to provide a greater number of effective interventions for people who are at risk or have experienced sexual assault. So within this study, the focused primarily on qualitative themes in college women’s hypothetical behavioral responses to what would be a date rape. They also will conduct varying degrees of a threat to try and get a broader range of responses within the same basic scenario, because they want to see the effect that the threat has specifically versus what effects the environment would play on the scenario (Anderson et al.).

To be able to assess the relationship between the intensity of responses and the intensity of the threat stimuli, each of the participants in the study were randomized to four different conditions that had different levels of intensity. Participants were asked to respond to the stimuli in an open-ended format, which in turn leads to this study being a qualitative study. A total of 143 college aged women, (they must have been 18 years or older to participate), were recruited in the fall of 2010 and spring of 2011 semesters through a psychology class to participate in the study. What was used as threat response stimulus was an audio recording by trained actors that depicts a couple, Jenny and Dan, on a date, that led them back to Dan’s apartment to watch a

movie. There is limited information about the date as well as other previous dates, but what is made clear is that the couple has not had sexual intercourse before. The scenario begins with casual conversation that then leads into mutual kissing. As the scenario continues, we start to see sexual behaviors arise with the woman politely refusing to go further, but the man persisting. This then leads to the woman responding angrily to the man and refusing. What was done next was that increasing the length of the audio recording before they were asked to respond to the created threat conditions. How the threats were broken down was: condition one was the woman politely refusing, which was considered a low threat, condition two was the man apologizing for touching her breasts a second time, which was considered a medium threat, condition three was the woman angrily refusing the man because he had touched her buttocks, which was considered a high threat, and condition four was decided by the participant themselves, which was them having to push a button to determine if the man had “gone too far”. This then gave more of an idea to the researchers as comparison to how the participants viewed the threat versus when it was designated by the researchers in conditions one through three (Anderson et al.).

The way the study was conducted was the participants were told to essentially put themselves in Jenny’s shoes and respond how they think they would if they were Jenny. When the audio recording automatically paused, the experimenter would ask each of the participants “What would you do now if you were Jenny? Please say and/or show what your response would be in this situation, there are no right or wrong answers and please be as honest as possible” (Anderson et al.). Each of the participants was able to generate a response, that was audio recorded by the experimenter, that was verbal, and no participant demonstrated a physical response without also verbally describing it.

Ten percent of the responses were chosen at random and examined. When analyzing the women's responses to a date rape stimulus threat, six major themes had been identified in order from the greatest identified to the least: assertion, compliance/acceptance, conditional decision making, avoidance, expressions of discomfort, and allusion to future contact. Overall, the results show that the "diversity of themes suggests that in this sample, participants shaped their responses to threat of date rape in more than just opposing dimensions of physical or non-physical and forceful and non-forceful responses" (Andersen et al.). The study overall showed that assertive behavioral responses to the threat of date rape were clearly shown by most of the sample. However, themes such as compliant or conditional behavioral responses seemed to also be practical and an effective strategy for participants to use as well (Andersen et. al.).

### **Interconnections Between Gender and Crime**

There are many reasons as to why there is a correlation between gender and crime. Many sociologists and criminologists have come up with a multitude of different theories that explain why this is true. One central theory to this is the "Doing Gender" Theory. In the 1980's, researchers West and Zimmerman had developed this theory that essentially states that gender is "done" by men and women on a daily basis, throughout their many interactions that they have with others. Even though this theory seems simple, it can actually tie to connections that are made between gender, crime, and justice. Within her book entitled *The Gender of Crime*, Dana Britton shows how men and women even "do gender" by looking at the types of crimes they commit. According to the Uniform Crime Reports and Britton, in 2009 there were almost three times as many men arrested than women. On top of that statistic, Britton also states that men tend to be arrested for more violent crimes typically such as forcible rape, murder, robbery, and

aggravated assault, whereas women tend to commit more petty crimes such as shoplifting. But how does this exactly tie back to the “doing gender” theory? According to Britton and additional theorist Albert Cohen, they believe that there is a link between criminality and masculinity. According to Cohen, men are more likely to turn to crime because they feel a pressure to succeed, and if that is not met by their own standards, they may feel the need to seek alternative avenues such as crime. An example of this can potentially be seen through the Sandy Hook shooting. It was reported on multiple media outlets after the shooting had occurred that the shooter, Adam Lanza, had been bullied and put down by classmates his entire life, which potentially could have left him feeling powerless and weak. So, theorists such as Britton and Cohen would argue that, although tragic, this may have been a case of wanting to live up to his “gender” standards, to gain that sense of power back, potentially (The Gender of Crime).

On the opposite side, when looking at gender with victimization, there is also a correlation to this. Although this might sound somewhat surprising, men are more likely to not only be victims of most violent crimes, but actually they are most likely to be victims of crime overall in the United States. According to Britton, this is because men that know each other are more likely to engage in interpersonal crimes, men are more likely to carry guns, and men are more likely to be in areas where crimes are typically committed, such as bars and the streets.

When women are victims, however, they tend to feel responsible or guilty for what had happened to them, according to Britton. They tend to think that they may have been in the wrong place at the wrong time, they were participating in high-risk behaviors, or they may have lead their offender on. This can explain why women tend to feel guilty when it comes to crimes relating back to domestic violence. Many women feel that they may have been the one to have

lead on their perpetrator, or that even if they were to say something, they would be the ones to get blamed for the crime occurring. This stigma needs to be broken and more women need to realize that there are other options out there and outlets and resources available for them to be able to utilize to help them (The Gender of Crime).

### **Solutions**

Throughout the past few years, there have been many organizations that have started to be able to help spread awareness about the issue surrounding domestic violence for college aged women. These organizations have stepped up to be able to be that voice for women who feel voiceless within what can be a very sticky situation. One organization that helps promote awareness for domestic violence for young women is the One Love Foundation. The Love family, in honor of their late daughter Yeardeley, founded this organization. In 2010, Yeardeley Love was beaten and killed by her ex-boyfriend just three weeks before they were planned to graduate from the University of Virginia. Since then, her family's mission has been to educate young people and communities about the difference between what a healthy and an unhealthy relationship looks like. This means showing these young people different relationship behaviors to look out for, and empowering them to trust their gut instinct and act upon a situation when they feel that it does not seem right. One of their approaches with connecting with young people is doing what they call an "Escalation Workshop". Essentially, this entails them travelling to different universities around the nation and presenting them with a 40 minute video, followed by a 45 minute peer-led discussion. The purpose of this workshop is to show how quickly the stages of a relationship can escalate very quickly, and sometimes in the wrong direction that could



make the relationship abusive. On top of that, they have started the #LoveBetter Campaign. This campaign's purpose is to make sure that people are committing to being in healthier relationships and to make sure that everyone is more mindful when it comes to seeing the signs of an abusive relationship. The pledge can be signed directly on their website or anyone can use the hash tag, #LoveBetter on social media to take the pledge (One Love).

More locally, there is another organization that looks at similar issues on domestic violence, called The Kristin Mitchell Foundation. Their mission is to “end the devastating effects of dating abuse by raising awareness about warning signs and preventative actions” (Kristin Mitchell Foundation). The Mitchell family founded this organization in honor of their late daughter, Kristin. In 2005, Kristin, who at the time was only 21 years old, was killed when her boyfriend stabbed her in a fit of rage. This occurred only three weeks after she graduated from Saint Joseph's University. Since the foundation has been founded though, the organization has made all efforts to support educational awareness about the dangers of abusive dating relationships. They travel to different colleges and high schools to speak on dating violence. They have also spoken to different domestic violence agencies in front of thousands of people within the Philadelphia and Baltimore region. They also raise funds to be able to provide a scholarship to a deserving undergraduate at Saint Joseph's University in Kristin's name for a student who exemplifies extraordinary service. Within recent years as well, the Mitchells have also lobbied for a Maryland law that makes it mandatory for schools to educate on domestic violence and the signs of it in middle and high schools (Kristin Mitchell). These are just two of the many organizations that work around the nation to help raise awareness for such a worthy

cause. They are only part of the solution as well, because they can only educate, but not act themselves when in a situation. The solution will be fully reached when people realize that they or a loved one is in an abusive relationship and be able to get the help they need to get out of it.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, it can truly be seen that domestic violence, especially among college-aged women is an issue that needs to be further addressed. Doing this research this past semester was very interesting for me, because years ago when I was 14 and a freshman in high school, I had found myself in an abusive relationship myself. I, just like many other women, found myself trapped with no one to talk to, to be able to get be out of what could have been an even more dangerous situation than I was already in. I now dedicate my life to making sure that none of my friends end up in the same place I was when they find themselves in relationships. And if I end up seeing one of them in an abusive relationship, I know to speak up to make sure that they know that someone is there that knows what they are going through and understands, because that would have been one of the biggest help for me if I had someone there to just talk to. I hope that in the years to come more laws get put into place to put harsher punishments on people that are the abusers, as well as more educational awareness for everyone to be able to learn the signs when in an abusive relationship or when they see a friend in one.

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