



Prevention of sexual violence

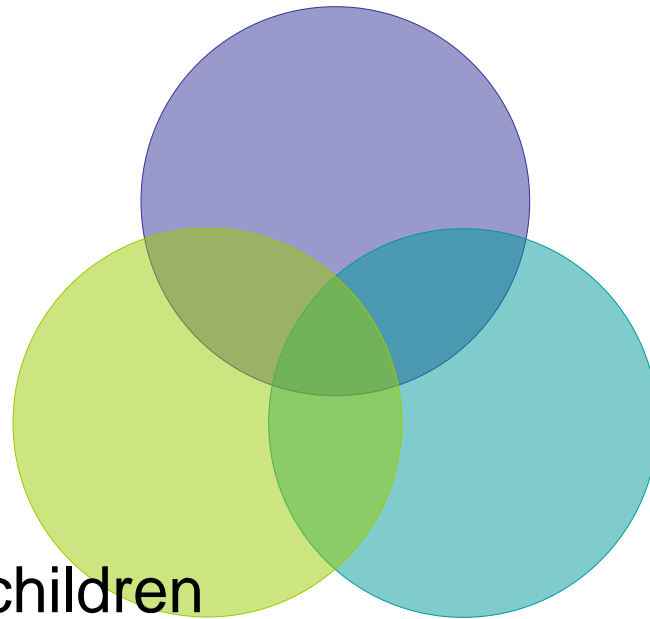
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What does sexual violence encompass?

(NB men & women perpetrate)

Other sexual assault



Sexual abuse of children

Rape (incl. sexual IPV) of adults



Risk factors for sexual violence victimisation:

- Young age
- Poverty
- Physical disability
- Dysfunctional homes
- Mental vulnerability: learning difficulties, depression, PTSD etc
- Prior victimisation
- Substance abuse
- These are *ALL* vulnerability factors – they do not *CAUSE* sexual violence



Understanding rape perpetration

- This is critical and chiefly requires research with men
- Focus of this presentation is on published literature on factors associated with rape perpetration
- Recognise that there are datasets that are still to be analysed and published from, and work in progress, that are not included



Existing literature: extremely limited, as exemplified by Whitaker review (2008)

- Systematic review of perpetration of child sexual abuse
- Conclusion that theoretical papers greatly outstrip empirical evidence
- 89 published studies between 1990 and April 2003
- None were longitudinal, none came from non-Western countries
- 85 'case-control' studies, 4 cross-sectional
- Size of sample of child sex offenders in studies, median = 34



Published literature on factors associated with perpetration is very severely limited

- Exclusively Western (exceptions South Africa x 1, Botswana/Swaziland x1)
- Many are very small studies
- Samples are college men and 'offenders', very few community-based studies
 - Exceptions:
 - South African RCT participants (n=1370);
 - Botswana/Swaziland (n= 1011) & South Africa (unpublished, n=1735) general population;
 - Minnesota school students (n=71 594);
 - 4 community studies from North America (n=163, 65, 195, 168)



Other limitations

- Definition:
 - Sexual Experiences Survey commonly used in the North American literature, there is a ‘rape’ measure in it but most analyses measure ‘sexual coercion’ which is a basket of coercive acts
 - Few studies are looking at ‘forced sex’ or an equivalent measure of rape
- We do not know if ‘rape’ and ‘sexual assault/coercion’ differ in causal factors and prevention priorities
- Literature does not enable examination of factors associated with rape perpetration in countries e.g. India where the majority of rape is of wives



Problems using current research to understand causation

- Temporal sequence - almost all research is cross-sectional
- Separating associated/contextual and causal factors
- Research on offender samples is particularly complex as 'risk of being caught' is a consideration
- Often unclear whether offenders in for non-sexual crimes are 'non offenders'
- Lists of risk factors do not give much information on how they combine or interact to lead to perpetration, nor pathways to this



Limitations of the theoretical frame

- Focus on individual and personality factors, including childhood experiences and IPV exposure
- Theoretical frame is limited, many factors operating at different levels of the ecological model are rarely included
- Gender inequality is rarely the frame for the research
- It falls well short of enabling a broader sociological analysis of rape at present



Minnesota schools survey, Grade 9 and 12s (4.8% had “forced someone into a sexual act”, n=71 594)

- Factors associated with perpetration:
 - Sexual abuse: by family or non-family
 - Witnessing IPV in home
 - Illegal drugs, steroids, alcohol abuse
 - Gang membership, ‘hanging out’ for 41+ hours per week
 - Psychological distress, suicidality
 - Less community connectedness



Returning to Whitaker (2008) and the meta-analysis of CSA perpetration

- **Family risk factors:** physical &/or sexual abuse, poor family functioning & attachment,
- **Externalising behaviours:** aggression; delinquency; substance abuse (including alcohol); various personality disorders;
- **Internalising behaviours:** anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, external locus of control,
- **Social deficits:** social skills deficit, loneliness, difficulty with intimacy relationships,
- **Sexual problems:** any deviant sexual interest
- **Cognitions:** tolerant of adult/child sex, minimising perpetrator culpability



CHILDHOOD FACTORS

PARENTAL AND HOME ENVIRONMENT (may include):

MATERNAL:

- IPV VICTIMISATION
- YOUNG AGE
- POVERTY
- MATERNAL ABSENCE
- MENTAL HEALTH INCL. SUBSTANCE ABUSE

PATERNAL:

- IPV PERPETRATION
- SUBSTANCE ABUSE
- PATERNAL ABSENCE

INSECURE ATTACHMENT

PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE / NEGLECT

CONDUCT DISORDER IN CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE : (with associated)

LOW EMPATHY/GUILT
AGGRESSION
LOW SELF-REGULATION
LOW SELF-ESTEEM

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

IMPACT ON MASCULINITY

**PERSONALITY
CHARACTERISTICS:
LOW SELF-ESTEEM
INSECURE**

**BEHAVIOURALLY
AGGRESSIVE**

CONFIGURATION OF IDEAS AND PRACTICES THAT:

- **VALOURISE TOUGHNESS/
STRENGTH**
- **EMPHASISED PERFORMANCE OF
HETEROSEXUALITY**
- **DOMINANCE AND CONTROL OVER
WOMEN—INCLUDING DOMINANT
IDEA OF MALE SEXUAL ENTITLE-
MENT AND USE OF VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN**



Conclusions

- Research on perpetration is in its early days, there is an urgent need to study rape in well-designed studies with men in community settings
- Multiple influences on rape perpetration so need complex intervention strategies
- Directions for rape prevention interventions can be taken from existing knowledge:
 - Preventing childhood trauma and strengthening family environments, including support for GBV prevention & positive parenting
 - Building gender inequity – work with men/boys and women/girls; changing social norms on gender;
 - Activities for teenage boys
 - Substance abuse
 - Addressing poverty & social inequality and broader structural issues
 - Criminal justice & victim responses



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