Soc 3290 Deviance Overheads Lecture 21: Sexual Assault 1

- * We will discuss sexual assault in 2 classes:
- * 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, commonlaw, 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 (1981): "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 (1995): student group solidarity, norms of masculinity, drinking & group pressure lead to campus sexual assault
- Schwartz & Nogrady (1996): fraternities not worse than other college men, but athletes more assault prone
- More research needed

- * The myth of victim-precipitation:
 - Amir (1971): 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 (1984): 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 victim's 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