Sexual Assault on HBCU Campuses
What do we know and how can we use this information to improve prevention efforts?

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RTI International
Presentation Overview

- Prevalence of victimization
- Risk factors
- Mental health consequences
- Disclosure and reporting experiences
- Implications for prevention efforts and survivor services
1. HBCUs play a major role in the education of Black students
   - Approximately 107 HBCUs in the U.S.
   - Although HBCUs represent only 3% of institutions of higher learning, they produce 20% of Black college graduates in the U.S.
   - Rich history of social justice and producing influential leaders

2. General population studies and some college population studies have found higher rates of sexual assault (and other forms of violence) among Black women
   - NISVS found higher rates of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner (Breiding, et al., 2014)
   - National College Health Assessment survey found higher rates of sexual assault (Coulter et al., 2017)
3. Contextual and cultural factors at HBCUs come into play
   - Strong sense of community among students
   - History of injustice and criminalization of Black men reinforces a culture of silence and distrust in law enforcement (as well as avoidance of medical and social service systems)
   - HBCUs have resource limitations for addressing sexual assault and staff often performs multiple roles
   - Improvements may be needed to better serve students with intersectional identities
   - Local (off campus) service providers may lack capacity to provide culturally relevant support to students

The HBCU Campus Sexual Assault (HBCU CSA) Study

- Funded by NIJ in 2007
- The largest study on this topic to date
- Included 4 diverse HBCUs
- Data collected from 3,951 undergraduate women
- Methods and survey instrument virtually identical to our earlier Campus Sexual Assault study (5,446 undergraduate women)
  - Anonymous, web-based
  - Incentives provided
  - Nonresponse bias analysis and adjustment
  - Behaviorally specific questions
  - Measured physically forced and incapacitated sexual assault
The HBCU CSA Study (continued)

- Close collaboration with participating schools
- Some measures (mainly examples) adapted based on student input
- Included measures of IPV at schools’ request
- Included open-ended questions about what could be done to increase reporting to school officials
Prevalence of Victimization

**Key Takeaways**

- About 10% of HBCU undergraduate women had experienced a completed sexual assault since entering college.
- This rate was lower than the comparable estimate from undergraduate women at non-HBCUs (13.7%).
- Further analyses showed that this difference was associated with lower alcohol-use frequency among Black women.
  - Once controlling for alcohol-use frequency, rates were not significantly different between HBCU vs. non-HBCU students nor between Black vs. White students.
- Sexual assaults experienced by HBCU students seemed to be similar (contextually) as what we see in non-HBCUs.
- Rates of intimate partner violence among HBCU women appeared to be quite high.
Prevalence Results for Completed Sexual Assault

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<tr>
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<th>HBCU-CSA N=3,364</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Before entering college</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Any sexual assault</td>
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<td>6.4%</td>
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Comparison with CSA data (non-HBCUs)

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<tr>
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<th>HBCU-CSA N=3,364</th>
<th>CSA N=4,994</th>
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Orange text indicates statistically significant differences (p<0.05)
Subsetting to black women only

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Frequency of Alcohol Use Since Entering College

- HBCU Women
  - Never: 19.2%
  - Less than once per month: 15.6%
  - Once or twice per month: 24.2%
  - Once or twice per week: 26.1%
  - Daily or almost daily: 3.0%

- Non-HBCU Women
  - Never: 24.8%
  - Less than once per month: 14.1%
  - Once or twice per month: 24.2%
  - Once or twice per week: 26.1%
  - Daily or almost daily: 1.0%

- Black HBCU Women
  - Never: 34.6%
  - Less than once per month: 20.9%
  - Once or twice per month: 33.0%
  - Once or twice per week: 0.9%
  - Daily or almost daily: 11.2%

- Black Non-HBCU Women
  - Never: 27.2%
  - Less than once per month: 15.5%
  - Once or twice per month: 24.8%
  - Once or twice per week: 0.9%
  - Daily or almost daily: 1.1%
Including alcohol use makes differences by school type and race disappear

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<th>Variable (Reference)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HBCU (Non-HBCU)</td>
<td>0.68***</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.92</td>
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<td>Black (White)</td>
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<td>Alcohol Use (Never)</td>
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<td>1-2 times per month</td>
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<td>1-2 times per week</td>
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<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forced SA before college</td>
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<td>2.20***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incapacitated SA before college</td>
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<td>3.55***</td>
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<td>Nagelkerke R-square</td>
<td>0.009</td>
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<td>0.094</td>
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*** = 0.001, ** = 0.01, * = 0.05
A note on the context of sexual assault

- Similar contexts as what we typically find in other climate surveys
  - Over half of victims knew the assailant well or very well
    - Most frequently reported assailants: classmates/fellow students, acquaintances; friends; current or former dating partners or spouses
    - Nearly all assailants were males, and 91% were of the same race as the victim
  - The majority of sexual assaults occurred off campus (most commonly in someone else’s living quarters), late at night, on weekends, and during the Fall and Winter months
What did we learn about other types of victimization?

Intimate partner violence (past year)

- Yelled, screamed, or cursed at: 56.0%
- Insulted or humiliated: 33.5%
- Monitored or controlled: 30.0%
- Threatened with harm: 13.9%
- Pushed, shoved, or slapped: 11.1%
- Choked, kicked, beaten, or burned: 7.2%
Risk Factors

Consistent with other campus sexual assault studies, HBCU women at greater risk of experiencing any sexual assault since entering college were more likely to:

- be attracted to both men and women
- be sorority members*
- attend fraternity parties at least once a month
- have dated since entering college
- have had sex with a man since entering college (6+ partners associated with greatest risk)
- binge drink (either less than once a month or at least once a month)
- have experienced physically forced sexual assault before college
- have experienced incapacitated sexual assault before college

*but attending sorority parties at least once a month was associated with lower risk
Consequences

Key Takeaways

- Women who experienced sexual assault of either type (forced, incapacitated) had significantly higher levels of current depression and post-traumatic stress disorder than non-victims
  - 53% of survivors of incapacitated sexual assault and 50% of survivors of physically forced sexual assault screened positive for PTSD, compared to only 23% of women who had not been assaulted
  - Sexual assault survivors had a mean depressive symptom score of 16, compared to 12.5 among women who had not been assaulted
- Poorer outcomes were evident even when controlling for a number of other covariates (e.g., previous sexual assault, physical health, age, race, IPV)
- Among sexual assault survivors, those who sustained injuries during the assault had higher depression and PTSD
Disclosure and Reporting

Key Takeaways

- Most students told someone close to them (family or friends) but disclosure to formal supports (particularly law enforcement) was extremely rare.
- Those who sought help from victims-assistance-type programs were more satisfied with the way it was handled than those who contacted law enforcement agencies.
- Students who did not report had concerns about the incident not being serious enough and their privacy not being maintained.
- Student-initiated suggestions for increasing reporting related to:
  - the need for more education and awareness about sexual assault
  - more survivor services and alternative mechanisms for reporting
  - better strategies for protecting the confidentiality of survivors who report
Although most victims told someone close to them about the assault, very few sought help from a crisis or health care center, and even fewer reported the incident to a law enforcement agency.
Satisfaction with disclosure experience

- Among the small number of students who sought help from a victims’, crisis, or health care center*
  - The majority sought help from a facility not affiliated with the university
  - The majority were satisfied with the way reporting was handled, especially those who sought off-campus services
  - About 27% of physically forced victims and 31% of incapacitated victims regret their decision to report

- Among the even smaller number of students who reported to any law enforcement agency*
  - About half contacted campus police and half contacted local police
  - Only 39% of physically forced survivors and 43% of incapacitated survivors were satisfied with the way the reporting was handled
  - About 36% of physically forced victims and 69% of incapacitated victims regret their decision to report

*these findings are based on very small numbers of survivors and should be interpreted with caution
Reasons for not reporting

Victims/Crisis/Health Care Center

- Did not want to talk about it
- Did not need assistance
- Felt it was not serious enough to report
- Did not want anyone to know about it
- Felt embarrassed
- Felt responsible for what happened

Law Enforcement

- Felt it was not serious enough to report
- Did not want anyone to know about it
- Felt responsible for what happened
- Felt embarrassed
Students’ perceptions of strategies for increasing reporting

- More education/awareness raising about sexual assault and existing services
  “I think that if women knew the resources available to them before a situation occurs, they might be more inclined to go. After a traumatic event someone might not want to put the energy in finding somewhere to go to seek help. Also, they might want to know about the process before going.”

- Offering more services and more accessible reporting opportunities for survivors
- Maintaining the confidentiality/privacy of survivors
- Providing protection/security to survivors
- Ensuring that outcomes will be positive for survivors
Implications for Prevention and Survivor Response
Key Takeaways

- Prevention programs tailored to the HBCU environment are important
  - Efforts to mobilize men of color as allies (e.g., norm-, attitudinal-focused programs) have been developed
  - Some bystander intervention programs have been designed for students of color and developed in partnerships with HBCUs (e.g., BOUT That Life)
  - Focusing on healthy, safe dating and intimate relationship skills also may be important
  - More resources for prevention staff also needed

- Improvements in reporting mechanisms needed
  - Expand the role of peer support (educate students about what to do, facilitate support groups, allow a friend to accompany survivor)
  - Improve procedures for maintaining survivor confidentiality and privacy
Key Takeaways (continued)

- Improvements in survivor services also needed
  - Better training of campus police (and need for greater responsiveness and trust)
  - Provision of culturally responsive care to survivors (e.g., services provided by women of color, trauma informed, informed about sociohistorical context of sexual assault among African Americans)
    - Important for off-campus providers to have this capacity as well
  - More attention to serve HBCU students with intersecting identities needed
  - More resources for victims’ services needed at HBCUs

- Improvements in the adjudication process needed
  - Student-led protests of inaction on the part of HBCU administrators
  - Cross-campus alliances (e.g., Spelman and Morehouse) could streamline adjudication process

- And finally, additional research is needed!
  - Expanded research partnerships with HBCUs
  - Incorporation of qualitative techniques for collecting data
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