

## Risk Factors of Forcible Rape

**Summary of Key Factors:** Alcohol consumption, prior victimization, presence of male organized peer groups such as fraternities and sports teams, availability of private rooms such as dorm rooms, knowing the motivated offender, being alone with offender after 6p.m., living in an urban area, being a female between the age of (16-24), first few weeks of college semester (months of late August and early September)

**Aim:** To assist analysts with the identification of risk factors for the production of risk terrain maps. Specifically, this brief provides an annotated review of the factors related to forcible rape and the settings and times for which some factors may be most relevant. This information should be especially useful to help choose a time period for creating risk terrain maps (i.e., Step 3), to identify aggravating and mitigating risk factors to include in your risk terrain model (i.e., Steps 5 and 6), and to inform the operationalization of your risk factors to risk map layers (i.e., Step 7).<sup>i</sup>

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### Operational Definition

For the purposes of this brief, forcible rape is defined as unwanted intercourse that occurs as a result of (1) force or threat of force, (2) the victim being physically unable to indicate lack of consent (e.g., due to intoxication), or (3) the victim being made incapable of consent because she/he was forcibly administered alcohol or drugs.<sup>ii</sup>

Subcategories of forcible rape are:

**Acquaintance rape:** Usually involves an attacker who is a classmate, friend, boyfriend, ex-boyfriend or other person known to the victim. Incidents usually occur when two people are in the same place such as a party or a dorm room.

**Date rape:** Rape that occurs at the end of a (friendly/romantic) date.

**Gang rape:** Multiple men taking turns to forcibly rape a woman.

**Stranger rape:** The attacker is not an acquaintance of the victim.<sup>iii</sup>

For the purpose of this brief, correlates of forcible rape will be divided based on data provided by college campuses and national samples because of the unique dynamics of forcible rape incidents that occur on college campuses compared to elsewhere.

### Aggravating/Mitigating Risk Factors of Forcible Rape on College Campuses Based on a Review of the Empirical Literature

#### Alcohol

In more than three-quarters of forcible rapes at colleges, the offender, the victim or both had been drinking. Alcohol-related rape cases on campuses involved victims who were frequently drinking enough to get drunk, drinking to the point of being unable to resist forceful sexual advances, using drugs and/or drinking (both the victim and the assailant).<sup>iv</sup> Reasons why alcohol is present in so many college rape cases includes: men become more sexualized when drinking, alcohol increases misperceptions, some men believe in stereotypes about women that drink, alcohol is used as a justification or an excuse, alcohol causes poor sending and receiving of friendly and sexual cues, alcohol decreases women's ability to resist rape.<sup>v</sup> Alcohol is usually involved in acquaintance rapes on campus because the victim feels some sort of comfort level in drinking with the acquaintance. In stranger rape cases, the victim usually has not had any alcohol to drink.

#### Repeat Victimization

College women most at risk of rape are those who were previously victims of childhood or teen sexual assault. Prior victims are nearly twice as likely to be raped in college than those with no previous history of sexual assault.<sup>vi</sup>

### **Presence of Athletic Teams, Fraternities**

Sexually abusive men often are friends with and loyal to other sexually abusive men and get peer support for their behavior, fostering and legitimizing it.<sup>vii</sup> Researchers suggest that certain all-male living arrangements foster unhealthy environments conducive to rape. College athletes are disproportionately reported to campus judicial officers for acquaintance rape. As for fraternities, a disproportionate number of documented gang rapes involve fraternity members.<sup>viii</sup> Fraternities are usually known for having private settings near the campus and holding unsupervised parties with abundant amounts of alcohol.

### **Setting Effects**

Environmental factors that can facilitate rape on college campuses include parties at an off-campus house, on or off-campus fraternity, availability of alcohol at parties, availability of a private room, loud music that drowns out the woman's calls, and, potentially, a cover-up by the house's residents, who may choose to maintain group secrecy over reporting the rape.<sup>ix</sup> By contrast, a date rape typically involves two people who are just becoming acquainted, and the offender rapes the victim in a car or residence after the date. Stranger rapes tend to occur in isolated areas of campus such as: parking lots, campus garages or in the woman's dorm room.

Thirty-four percent of completed rapes and 45 percent of attempted rapes take place on campus. Almost 60 percent of the completed campus rapes that take place on campus occur in the victim's residence, 31 percent occur in another residence, and 10 percent occur in a fraternity.<sup>x</sup>

### **Temporal Differences**

College students are the most vulnerable to being victims of rape during the first few weeks of the freshman and sophomore years. In fact, the first few days of the freshman year are the riskiest.

Research has shown that rapes of college women tend to occur after 6 p.m., and the majority occur after midnight.<sup>xi</sup>

## **Aggravating/Mitigating Risk Factors of Forcible Rape Based on a Review of the Empirical Literature Regarding National Samples of the General Population**

### **Urban/Rural**

As with other types of violent crime, the size and type of jurisdiction are related to the rates of arrest for forcible rape and other sex offenses. Larger cities with the largest

populations have the highest rates of forcible rape in the United States.<sup>xii</sup>

### **Victim/Offender Relationship**

Most rape incidents involve offenders that the victim already knows. In cases with children under 12 years of age, law enforcement agencies reported that family members victimized most of these young victims. Victims age 16-24 (i.e., the largest age group of rape victims) had a prior relationship with the rapist, but they were more likely to have been acquaintances than family members.<sup>xiii</sup>

### **Victim's Residence/Setting Effects**

More than half of rape/sexual assault incidents were reported by victims to have occurred at their own home or within one mile of their home.

### **Temporal Differences**

Based on 1995 NIBRS data, two-thirds of rapes/sexual assaults were found to occur between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. Nearly a third of the rapes took place between midnight and 4 a.m., with little variation in time of day by victim-offender relationship or by location of occurrence. The period from 8 p.m. Friday to 8 a.m. Saturday had the largest number of rapes in a 12-hour block. Law enforcement data indicate that the highest volume of rape reports in 1995 (9.9% of the annual total) were recorded in August and the fewest (6.8%) were recorded in December.

### **Recommended (Publically Available) Readings**

Sampson, R. (2002). *Acquaintance Rape of College Students*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of COPS. Available:

[http://www.popcenter.org/problems/pdfs/Acquaintance\\_Rape\\_of\\_College\\_Students.pdf](http://www.popcenter.org/problems/pdfs/Acquaintance_Rape_of_College_Students.pdf)

Greenfield, L. (1997). *Sex Offenses and Offenders*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. Available:

<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/SOO.PDF>

Kilpatrick, D.G.; Resnick, H.S.; Ruggiero, K.J.; Conoscenti, L.M.; McCauley, J. (2007). *Drug Facilitated, Incapacitated and Forcible Rape: A National Study*. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Justice. National Institute of Justice. Available:

<http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/219181.pdf>

### **Endnotes**

<sup>i</sup> For steps of risk terrain map production, download the RTM Manual at [www.riskterrainmodeling.com](http://www.riskterrainmodeling.com)

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- <sup>ii</sup> Testa, M.; Livingston, J.A., Tamsen, C., Frone, M.R.(2003). The Role of Women's Substance Use in Vulnerability to Forcible and Incapacitated Rape. Buffalo, NY:Research Institute on Addictions.
- <sup>iii</sup> Sampson, R.(2002). Acquaintance Rape of College Students. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of COPS.
- <sup>iv</sup> Abbey, A. (2002). Alcohol-related sexual assault: A common problem among college students. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 14, 118-128.
- <sup>v</sup> Sampson,R. (2002). Acquaintance Rape of College Students. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of COPS.
- <sup>vi</sup> Miller, B. A., Downs, W. R., Gondoli, D. M., & Keil, A. (1987). The role of childhood sexual abuse in the development of alcoholism in women. *Violence and Victims*, 2, 157-172.
- <sup>vii</sup> Koss, M., and H. Cleveland III (1996). "Athletic Participation, Fraternity Membership and Date Rape: The Question Remains--Self-Selection or Different Causal Processes?" *Violence Against Women* 2(2):180-190.
- <sup>viii</sup> Humphrey, S., and A. Kahn (2000). "Fraternities, Athletic Teams and Rape: Importance of Identification With a Risky Group." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 15(12):1313-1322.
- <sup>ix</sup> Koss, M., and J. Gaines (1993). "The Prediction of Sexual Aggression by Alcohol Use, Athletic Participation and Fraternity Affiliation." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 8(1):94-108.
- <sup>x</sup> Sampson,R. (2002). Acquaintance Rape of College Students. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of COPS
- <sup>xi</sup>Fisher, B., F. Cullen and M. Turner (2000). *The Sexual Victimization of College Women*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice and Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- <sup>xii</sup>Greenfield,L. (1997). Sex Offenses and Offenders. Washington, DC:U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs
- <sup>xiii</sup> Kilpatick, D.G.; Resnick, H.S.; Ruggiero, K.J.; Conoscenti, L.M.; McCauley, J. (2007). Drug Facilitated, Incapacitated and Forcible Rape: A National Study. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Justice. National Institute of Justice.