

Chapter 11- Violence Against Women

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Key Terms

Battering- physical assaults and other physical abuse committed against a woman by a male intimate

Cultural Myths- as used in criminology, refers to false beliefs in society that makes crimes such as rape and battering more likely

Dowry Deaths- murders of women in India and Pakistan because their families could not pay the expected dowry

Femicide- the murder of women and girls

Genital Mutilation- the excision of a clitoris

Male Dominance- the supremacy of men in society

Patriarchy- male supremacy

Rape- forced or non-consensual sexual intercourse

Sexual Assault- forced or non-consensual sexual contact that does not involve sexual intercourse

Stalking- persistent following, observing, and/or harassment of an individual

Overview: The Gendered Nature of Violent Crime

An International Problem

- 1/3 women across the world have been raped, beaten or abused
- The greatest human rights scandal of our time
- Female genital mutilation affects more than 100 million women worldwide
- Dowry deaths claim lives of thousands of women annually in India and Pakistan
 - Brides are expected to pay groom with money or gifts
 - If they do not, they are beaten and/or killed
 - Burn women with kerosene and pretend she caught fire in the kitchen
 - Police are bribed to accept the death was accidental
- Wartime rapes have occurred for centuries
- Femicide dates back to medieval witch burnings
- Violence against women ensures the continuance of male supremacy
- Women are murdered and assaulted because they are women, sexist terrorism

Defining Rape and Battering

- Rape is forced sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral penetration by the offender)
 - Also includes incidents where the penetration is from a foreign object (bottles, guns, branches etc.)
- Sexual assaults include verbal threats and unwanted sexual contact such as grabbing/fondling, not including intercourse
- Battering (domestic violence) is also called intimate-partner violence or intimate violence
 - Include aggravated assaults and simple assaults
- Almost all battering is done against women
- Problem with battering: excludes psychological abuse

Extent of Rape and Battering

Rape

- 18% of women have been raped at least once in their lifetime
 - 83% of those rapes committed by men they knew
- It is more common than not for a woman to have an experience of sexual assault during her lifetime
- Intimates commit about 20% of all rapes, especially likely to occur in relationships that also include battering
- Intimate rapes are more traumatic because they cause a woman to feel betrayed and distrust all men
 - They often have to continue living with the husband/boyfriend who raped them

Battering

- Battering is more common than rape
- 1/3 of all US women will be assaulted by a male partner in their lifetime
- 1/4 of all Canadian women will be assaulted by a male partner in their lifetime
- Women are more likely to be killed, assaulted, or raped, by a partner than any other person

Social Patterning of Rape and Battering

Age

- Young women are much more likely than older women to experience IPV (intimate-partner violence)

Social Class

- Poorer women have higher rates of IPV
 - 6.6 times higher than women in highest income bracket
- Underscores an important consequence of economic inequality in society
- 20% of college women are raped while they are in school
 - Sexual aggression is commonplace in college dating relationships

Race and Ethnicity

- African-American rates are only slightly higher than white rates
- Native American rates are by far the highest
 - 1/3 of Native American women will be raped at least once
 - 1/6 of non-Native American women will be raped at least once
- Most rapes of Native Americans are committed by non-Native American men
- Women of colour also face greater problems in seeking help
- Anti-rape/battered women movements were started by white feminists and do not include many coloured women
- Immigrant women and undocumented workers face possible legal problems/deportation if they contact police for help
- Certain ethnic groups have cultural traditions making battered/raped women reluctant to seek help
 - Native Americans do not like to seek help outside their community
 - Asians harbour hostility to the larger, white community which inhibits women from reporting their victimization

Explaining Rape and Battering

- Is the crime more psychological or sociological in origin?
- Psychological perspective assumes that most rapists and batterers have mental problems that predispose them to commit their crimes
- Sociological approach emphasizes the structural and cultural roots of rape and battering
- Psychologically normal men often rape and batter, only a small portion have mental disorders

Gender and Economic Inequality

- Rape/battering is an inevitable consequence of patriarchy, or male dominance
- These crimes reflect women's inequality and allow men to exert and maintain their power over women
- Rape rates are higher where women have low income and education, but also are higher where women have higher education and occupational prestige
- "backlash hypothesis" suggests violence against women is higher when men feel their equality threatened (gender or economic)

Cultural Myths Supporting Rape and Battering

- Cultural beliefs that either minimize the harm rape and battering cause or blame women for their victimization make these crimes inevitable

Rape Myths

- "women like to be raped" and "ask to be raped by their dress/behaviour"
- Traditional dating ritual that men make the first move feeds the myth that women like to be raped
- These myths are common if the woman has been sexually active in the past
- Often there are no physical signs of rape because the woman is too afraid of worse consequences

Battering Myths

- Battered women are blamed for being hit, they must have done something to anger their male partner
- Battering must not be bad because many women do not leave the batterer or call the police
- If a woman has children, there is often nowhere to go, so she stays in her harmful relationship
- Many battered women have to independent income, they economically cannot afford to leave
- Most battered women blame themselves or feel they deserved it

Battered Men: Fact or Fiction

- Source of heated debate because if women also batter men, why are only women victims given special attention?
- 12% of each gender committed at least one act of violence towards their spouse in a given year
- Woman violence is often self-defence/result of being battered
- Women tend to commit minor acts of violence (slapping, pushing) where men commit more serious acts (beating, weapon use)
- Men are much more likely to repeat their violence
- Women are 7 to 14 times more likely to report battering

Stalking

- Recognized in 1990's by public and media as a serious problem
- Stalking is generally seen as a violent crime a man does against a woman
 - Intimidate a woman into staying in a romantic relationship
- 8% of woman and 2% of men said they had been stalked at least once (followed or harassed at least twice by the same person in such a way they felt very afraid)
- 4/5 stalking victims know the offender
- 30%-40% of the victims are eventually attacked

Reducing Violence Against Women

- IPV against women has decreased since the 1990's
- We must work to reduce male dominance and poverty
- Need even more crisis centres and shelters in urban and rural areas alike
- Educate criminal justice officials on the true nature of intimate violence
- "rape-shield" laws to restrict use of a woman's sexual history in rape cases
 - All states permit evidence of a sexual history with the offender