Descriptive Analysis of Sexual Assault Incidents Reported to Alaska State Troopers: 2003-2004

UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

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Forcible Rape & Sexual Assault

• **Forcible Rape (FBI/UCR):**
  – carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will. Includes attempts, but excludes statutory rape (without force) and male victims.

• **Sexual Assault (AS 11.41.410-427, 11.41.434-438):**
  – Includes sexual penetration and sexual contact.
  – Includes statutory rapes.
  – Includes incapacitated rapes.
  – Includes male victims.
Forcible Rape in Alaska

Source: Uniform Crime Reports, 1997-2006

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Goals of UAA/AST/DOL Project

- **Describe Sexual Assaults Reported to Alaska State Troopers (AST):**
  - “Descriptive Analysis of Sexual Assault Incidents Reported to Alaska State Troopers: 2003-2004.”
  - [http://justice.uaa.alaska.edu](http://justice.uaa.alaska.edu)

- **Improve AST Response, to Enhance:**
  - Victim and community safety, and
  - Offender accountability, by increasing the number of cases referred, accepted, and convicted.

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Methodology

• AST Case Reviews:
  – Sexual assaults and sexual abuse of minor cases reported to AST in 2003 and 2004 (N=989).
  – Summarized charge, suspect, victim, and incident characteristics.

• DOL Outcome Data:
  – Examined whether cases were referred, accepted, and convicted.
  – Only examined referrals to DOL.
Key Findings

- Report Characteristics
- Evidence Collection
- Suspect Characteristics
- Victim Characteristics
- Incident Characteristics
- Legal Resolutions
Report Characteristics

• **Number of reports by Detachment and Unit:**
  – 48% to C Detachment (Western AK), 30% to Alaska Bureau of Investigation (ABI)
  – 17% to Bethel Enforcement, 8% to Palmer ABI

• **First responder:**
  – 86% to AST, 7% to VPSO, 7% to VPO

• **Investigation outcome:**
  – Average investigation was 18 weeks, with half of the cases closed within 8 weeks
  – 15% were unfounded (false or baseless)
    • 81% of unfounded cases were reported by someone other than the victim
Evidence Collection

- Physical evidence from victim: 22%
- Victim sexual assault evidence collection kit: 20%
- Physical evidence from the scene: 16%
- Physical evidence from the suspect: 13%
- Photographs of the scene: 13%
- Suspect sexual assault evidence collection kit: 7%
- Search warrants: 36%
- Forensic exams of evidence: 16%
Suspect Characteristics

• Demographics:
  – 97% male
  – 59% Native and 37% White
  – On average, 29 years old

• Locating and interviewing the suspect:
  – Identity known for 90% of suspects
  – 25% of suspects present upon Trooper arrival
  – 66% cooperated
  – 77% interviewed (57% within one week)
• **Substance use (incident based):**
  – 43% used alcohol (57% did not)
  – 7% used drugs (93% did not)

• **Charges:**
  – 34% with multiple charges
  – 27% with multiple sexual assault charges
  – 6% with non-sexual assault charges
Victim Characteristics

• **Demographics:**
  – 89% female; 61% Native and 38% White
  – On average, 16 years old (80% under 21 years of age; 65% under 16)
  – Most assaults were intra-racial
  – Most victims were younger than suspects

• **Substance use (incident based):**
  – 27% used alcohol; 5% used drugs

• **Victim injuries:**
  – 19% with physical pain, 10% with bruising and swelling
Victim/Suspect Comparisons

• Overall, 87% of Assaults were Intra-Racial:
  – 91% of Native victims assaulted by Native suspects
  – 84% of White victims assaulted by White suspects

• Five Most Common Age Combinations (48%):
  – 13%: Victims 0-12 years old; Suspects 31+ years old
  – 11%: Victims 13-15 years old; Suspects 16-20 years old
  – 9%: Victims 13-15 years old; Suspects 21-30 years old
  – 7%: Victims 13-15 years old; Suspects 31+ years old
  – 7%: Victims 31+ years old; Suspects 31+ years old
Victim Characteristics

- **Forensic / medical examinations:**
  - 26% received a SART exam (38% of victims who reported within 72 hours received a SART exam)

- **Victim interviews:**
  - 96% interviewed (91% in-person; 80% within one week)

- **Victim-suspect relationships:**
  - 46% were friends or acquaintances; 35% were family members; 12% were former or current partners. Only 2% were strangers

- **Required victim notifications rarely documented (OVR, DV and VCCB)**
• **Locations:**
  – 84% initiated in a private residence, 86% occurred in a private residence

• **Victim condition at time of assault:**
  – 60% were sober, 16% were intoxicated, 14% were sleeping, 10% were passed out (intoxicated)

• **Sexual acts:**
  – 60% of incidents included sexual penetration
  – 40% of incidents involved penile penetration of vagina
  – 52% of incidents involved touching external genitalia
Incident Characteristics

- **Weapons used during assault:**
  - 30% involved restraints/strikes by hands/feet; other weapons (knives, guns) used in less than 1% of incidents.

- **Ejaculation and condom use:**
  - Ejaculation occurred in 35% of incidents
  - Condoms used in 10% of incidents

- **Reporting incidents:**
  - 45% of incidents were reported within one day; 10% within 1-4 days; 5% within 5-7 days; 10% within 1-4 weeks; 30% more than 1 month after incident
• Of the 989 Reports to AST:
  – 46% (N=452) were referred to DOL (others may have been referred to other agencies),
  – 28% were accepted for prosecution, and
  – 22% resulted in a conviction (plea or jury/court trial).

• Of the 452 Cases Referred to DOL:
  – 60% (N=273) were accepted for prosecution, and
  – 49% resulted in a conviction (plea or jury/court trial).

• Of the 273 Cases Accepted for Prosecution:
  – 80% resulted in a conviction (plea or jury/court trial)
Improving Legal Resolutions

• Most common reasons for not accepting charges as referred are evidentiary reasons
• Must improve capacity to collect evidence, when it is available
• Must now develop research-based responses to sexual assault
• Need systemic data-driven changes to prevention and intervention strategies
• Lowering the rate of sexual assault will require substantial investments and new initiatives

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Comments and Questions

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