


What the Evidence Reveals About Repeat Sexual Offending by Young Men
November 11th, 2025 | RaeAnn E. Anderson, PhD

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Outline

- Who we are and why are we here
- Terms and Basic facts
- Methodology: How do we know what we think we know
- Rates of repeated perpetration from multiple literatures
- Review prior, high impact research?
- Implications for prevention on campuses and in communities
- Conclusions



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Who are we and why are we here?



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Who are we and why are we here

Who are we

- People who care
- People who believe those who have perpetrated/caused sexual harms can change their behavior
- People who believe these harmful behaviors can be prevented

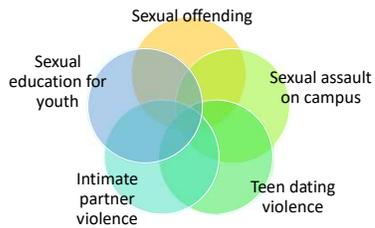
Why are we here

- We are curious
- We are out there doing the work



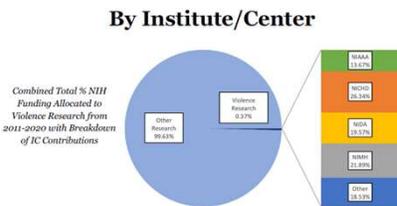
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All trying to solve the same problem



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Why are we here: challenges to doing the work



Data from: Williams, Burton, Anderson, & Draughon Moret (2022) in JAMA



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Why are we here: challenges to doing the work

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Big feelings about repeat perpetration

- Why big feelings?
 - Both cultural and practical
- Cultural level.....want to believe certain things about rape
- Practical level.....many implications for how to go about prevention and intervention

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My research and perspective

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Terms and basic facts



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Terms and basic facts

- Sexual perpetration – instigating sexual activity without freely given consent
- Repeat perpetration – people who have perpetrated more than once
- Sexual offending – sexual perpetration, but in a legal context or population
- Sexual victimization – experiencing sexual activity without freely given consent; the experience of the person who was targeted, harmed
- Contact sexual victimization affects approximately 50% of American women; 30% American men
 - For a little more than half of these women, this occurs before age 18
 - Risk takes a big JUMP around age 15
- Approximately 30% of American college men report perpetration
- -> Today, most of the data I will be discussing is on the topic of sexual perpetration and collected from men



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How do we know these basic statistics?

- Large scale survey research
- Epidemiological research
- Surveys that use behaviorally specific terms
- ->but notice an important difference from our topic to the data I just detailed



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Behaviorally-specific items/questionnaires

Behaviorally-specific

Face-valid

	How many times in the past 12 months?
	0 1 2 3+
3. I put my penis (men only), or I put my fingers or objects (all respondents) into a woman's vagina without her consent by:	
a. Telling lies, threatening to end the relationship, threatening to spread rumors about them, making promises about the future I knew were untrue, or continually verbally pressuring them after they said they didn't want to.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
b. Showing displeasure, criticizing their sexuality or attractiveness, getting angry but not using physical force after they said they didn't want to.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
c. Taking advantage when they were too drunk or out of it to stop what was happening.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
d. Threatening to physically harm them or someone close to them.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
e. Using force, for example holding them down with my body weight, pinning their arms, or having a weapon.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

• Do you think you have ever raped someone? Yes/No



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Behaviorally specific items

• The difference between these two approaches is HUGE



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Behaviorally specific items

- Best estimates of prevalence of sexual perpetration comes from a systematic review of 78 studies with 25,000+ college men
 - Any sexual perpetration: 29.3%
 - Any verbal pressure/coercion: 19.0%
 - Rape: 6.5%
 - Face-valid/acknowledged rape: 0.9%



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Behaviorally specific items

- This same systematic review demonstrated that the measurement of perpetration is really sensitive to small wording changes
 - Some questionnaires produced higher rates than others
 - Things like using a scaled response format (0, 1, 2-5, 6-9, 10+ times) vs. yes/no increases prevalence rates
 - Asking about more forms of sexual behaviors increases prevalence rates
 - And many other nuances



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Methodology:

How do we know what we think we know?



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How does this relate to repeat sexual perpetration?

- Have to measure sexual perpetration behaviors accurately
- &
- Place these behaviors in time



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How does this relate to repeat sexual perpetration?

- Have to measure sexual perpetration behaviors accurately
- &
- Place these behaviors in time



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Example different studies, different numbers

Citation	Population	Time scale	Prevalence rate of Repeated Perpetration	Measurement of Repeated perpetration
Hanson et al., (2018)	7225 men with sexual offenses	6 mo. To 31 years	11.1%	Recidivism (new charge or conviction)
Lisak & Miller, 2002	1882 community men	Once	63.3%	One time survey
Swartout et al., 2015	1645 college men	Annually for 4 years	25%	If reported perpetration in more than one year
Foubert et al., 2019	12624 college men	once	56.8%	One time survey

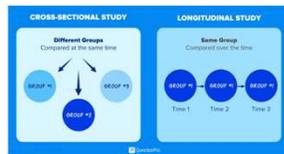
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Answering this question is not easy

Longitudinal data

- Need ask same people over time, while maintaining anonymity
- And each level of analysis is going to have a different level of precision, but also trade-offs



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How do we measure sexual perpetration behaviors?

Levels of analysis:

- Day
- Week
- Month
- Quarter
- Year

	Once	Twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	11-20 times	More than 20 times	This has never happened
I pushed or shoved my partner.	<input type="radio"/>						
My partner did this to me.	<input type="radio"/>						
I used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have oral or anal sex.	<input type="radio"/>						
My partner did this to me.	<input type="radio"/>						
I used a knife or gun on my partner.	<input type="radio"/>						
My partner did this to me.	<input type="radio"/>						

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Rates of repeated perpetration

From multiple literatures

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Longitudinal studies using behaviorally-specific measures

	Study/cite	Sample	Follow-up period	% any	of any % repeated	Summary by section
Teen dating vio.	Temple studies	817 teens	Yearly for 12 years	38.4%	54.1%	4-12 years 54.1-60%
	Ybarra & Petras 2021	1129 youth	Yearly for 4 years	3.5%	60%	
Campus sex.	Abbey & McAuslan	197 men	Yearly for 2 years	35.0%	24.6%	2.5 to 4 years 25- 57.5%
	Thompson et al., 2013	795 men	Yearly for 4 years	29.1%	57.5%	
	Swartout et al., 2015	1500+ men	Yearly for 4 years	10.8%	25%	
	Testa & Cleveland, 2016	1043 men	Semesterly for 2.5 yrs.	19.6%	41.4%	
Comm.	Garner et al., 2025	99 men drinkers+	90 days	52.5%	46%	90 days 38.1 – 46%
	Davis et al., 2015	217 drinkers+	90 days	7.3%	38.1%	
	Hammet et al., 2025	565	90 days	8.8%	46%	
Sex. Offend.*	Hanson et al., 2018	7225	6 mo. To 31 years	100%	11.1%	3 mo. to 31 yrs. 0 – 68%
	Lussier et al., 2024	30396 youth	1 to 73+ months	100%	8.0%	
	Lussier et al., 2024	23632 studies	3 mo. to 25 years	100%	0 to 68%	

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Clouser look: teen dating violence data

Temple studies	817 teens	Yearly for 12 years	38.4%	54.1%
Ybarra & Petras 2021	1129 youth	Yearly for 4 years	3.5%	60%

- Both studies reported relatively high rates
- And...
 - Only used 3-4 items
 - Less behaviorally-specific questions
 - Ybarra & Petras prevalence rate very low
- Both studies ask about victimization as well as perpetration
- **Are these underestimates?**



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Clouser look college data

- Tight range of follow-up periods (2.5 to 4 years) makes more comparable; range 25-57.5%
- Swartout et al figure:
 - In text reported differently; 8.1% - increasing; 8.6% - consistently high; 12.4% decreasing
 - That's 57.5% repeating perpetration across trajectories
- **But how many perpetrated more than once within a year?**
- **None asked about intimate partner perpetration**
- **Are these underestimates?**

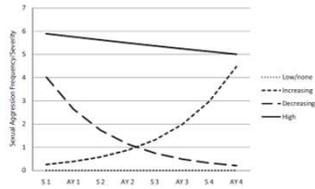


Figure 1. Plot of estimated latent sexual aggression trajectories. Note: S1 = prior to college; AY1 = first academic year; S2 = summer between first and second academic years; AY2 = second academic year; S3 = summer between second and third academic years; AY3 = third academic year; S4 = summer between third and fourth academic years; AY4 = fourth academic year.



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Clouser look quarterly/monthly data

Garner et al., 2025	99 men drinkers+	90 days	52.5%	46%
Davis et al., 2015	217 drinkers+	90 days	7.3%	38.1%
Hammet et al., 2025	565	90 days	8.8%	46%

- Range 38.1 to 46%, but some of these samples were ppl more likely to report perpetration (like ppl who binge drink)
- Ranges of number of episodes of perpetration in 90 days:
 - Garner: 1-13; Davis: 1-6; Hammet: 1-29
- **Rarely reported crossover between 90 days and since age 14 perpetration**
 - **So are these underestimates?**



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Closer look at sexual offending data

Hanson et al., 2018	7225	6 mo. To 31 years	100%	11.1%
Lussier et al., 2024	30396 youth	1 to 73+ months	100%	8.0%
Lussier et al., 2024	23632 studies	3 mo. to 25 years	100%	0 to 68%

- Some of lowest ranges
 - Legal-involvement probably highly effective influence on behavior; very motivating factor to not perpetrate again
 - And, none of these studies used behaviorally-specific measures
 - None were anonymous
 - We don't really know why some people get reported/arrested and others do not
 - So are these underestimates?



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Summary of the data



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Summary

- Overall, this suggests repeated perpetration definitely exists and is not rare
 - But what else can we say???
 - Only 1 study on predictors of trajectories/repeatedness over time (Thompson et al., 2015) in non-justice research
 - Justice research: age, gender, neighborhood, geography (Lussier et al., 2024); risk level



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Summary

- Median/mode across studies probably in the 40s.....in spite of all that variation in methods and populations!
 - Yet, 9/12 studies measured perpetration as present/absent within the set study intervals
 - But, 90-day studies suggest repeat perpetration within 90s is in the 30/40s...
 - Studies either asked about intimate partners or asked about partners generally; not both
 - So many of these estimates **may be under-estimates. We don't know.**



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Implications for prevention



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Implications for prevention

- Even though the data cannot give us exact estimates, obviously perpetration behaviors repeat for some people
 - People who perpetrate are heterogenous like any other people
 - Different people may need different things or different doses of things
- Think big and look upstream. What are upstream behaviors we can prevent or promote?
 - Family cohesion, disclosure training, sex ed., abuse prevention
 - What is a key target that can change multiple outcomes?
 - New theory/models: resilience portfolio (Hamby et al., 2018)
 - This includes policy and advocacy
 - How do we get more research funding?



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Implications for prevention

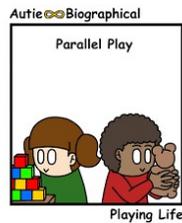
- Acceptability/implementation science perspectives:
 - How do we get people in the door?
 - Vary a ton based on age, community, et cetera
 - Family wellbeing for kids vs. best sex for college men
- Prevention is essentially non-existent for college men....how can we translate what we know works in sex offending treatment to prevention?
 - What aspects of the risk-need-responsivity model can we incorporate to prevention? Good lives model?
 - Are we underselling behaviorist principals?
 - But take care: limited ability to just try stuff out for practical and legal reasons



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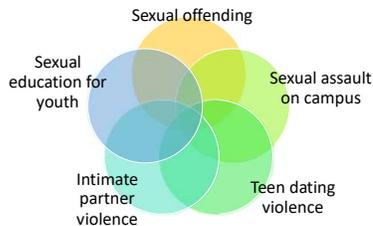
Implications for prevention

- Let's learn more from each other
- How do we get out of the parallel play paradigm?
- Read more in other literatures/mix up those keywords
- Change up which conferences you attend
- Call folks in your community
 - Example in my state



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All trying to solve the same problem



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All trying to solve the same problem

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Thank you!

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Key references

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