

SEXUAL ASSAULT OF MALES

There seems to be a pervasive societal myth that adult males are rarely victims of sexual assault. This is not true. Research has shown that sexual assault of adult males does occur—and not just inside prison walls. Men have experienced sexual violence in religious organizations, institutions of higher education, and military settings. The risk for men to be sexually assaulted depends on the following four factors: the individual's physical environment, physical ability, mental health, and sexual orientation.

According to Nicholas Groth, founder and former director of a program that treats sex offenders in Connecticut state prisons, male sexual assault is “an act of retaliation, an expression of power, an assertion of ...strength or manhood.” The same is true for sexual assaults committed against women. However, male sexual assault is far more underreported than female sexual assault. And, unlike sexual assaults on women, male sexual assault is a crime few people talk about—including the victims themselves.

There are various **myths** pertaining to the sexual assault of adult males. Due to these **myths**, the severity and frequency of male sexual assault is diminished. Male victims, therefore, are more prone to suffer the

consequences of long-term effects. Following are a few of these **myths**:

- Sexual assault of adult males rarely happens.
- Male victims are less traumatized than women who are sexually assaulted.
- Other males only sexually assault men.
- Male victims will become, or are, homosexual.

Victims of male sexual assault suffer the same effects as those experienced by women. These effects may include fear, isolation, humiliation, powerlessness, anxiety, anger, depression, sleep and appetite disturbances, physical complaints, relationship difficulties, and sexuality and masculinity issues. Long-term effects can be decreased through counseling and a strong support system.

In addition, because men are socialized to believe they should be able to defend themselves from any attack, acknowledging a sexual assault is even more difficult. A victim may perceive himself as weak and may also fear that he will not be believed.

Even though research shows that perpetrators of male sexual assaults are frequently other males, studies also indicate that females perpetrate this crime more often than expected. People tend to believe that, in order for a male to be sexually assaulted, he must be overpowered during the assault.

What are neglected in this belief are the emotional and psychological factors that may be operating.

Homophobia is the greatest stigma attached to male sexual assault. The fear is that a male who is sexually assaulted by another male is either gay or will become gay. This fear is held by people in general. However, in reported cases, the majority of victims of male-on-male sexual assaults indicated that the perpetrators were heterosexual (Groth & Burgess, 1980; Isely & Gehrenbeck-Shim, 1997; Scarce, 1997). Nevertheless, many male victims themselves will question their sexuality. The victim may also worry whether other people perceive him to be homosexual. In addition, if a male resists the sexual advances of a female, he and/or others may question his sexuality (Waliski, A., 2004).

Campus Resources

Sexual Assault Services

334 William Pitt Union 412-648-7930

Counseling Center

334 William Pitt Union 412-648-7930

Student Health Service

3708 Fifth Avenue 412-383-1800

Student Judicial Services

738 William Pitt Union 412-648-7918

University of Pittsburgh Police

G1 Wesley W. Posvar Hall 412-624-2121 or
412-648-2121

On-Campus Emergency 811

Community Resources

UPMC Presbyterian Hospital (Emergency
Room) 412-624-2000

Pittsburgh City Police (24 hrs) 911

Pittsburgh Action Against Rape (24 hrs)
412-765-2731

Center for Victims of Violence and Crime
(24 hrs) 412-392-8582