

A Women's Center interview with men

One thing we emphasize at the women's center is that culturally, it is time to change the way we address sexual assault. For too long, we have been "cleaning up" after the violence. We are hoping that the time has come when such events as the Season for Nonviolence, the KSU Campaign for Nonviolence, and public awareness about the issue of sexual assault will reach a critical mass. It is time for this insane victimization of half of our population to end.

It seems that as individuals get a stronger sense of who they are, and what they would like to accomplish in their life, that some of the victimization would stop. In speaking with several KSU male students about rape, it appears that the same tired old stereotypes are being shoved onto men by men—and I hope that K-State men will begin to think for themselves—getting feelings of power or strength by hurting others is not the way to become a grown-up, powerful man. I asked several male students about rape myths and issues—

Mary: What do you think is often accepted about rape that is actually a myth?

MJ (graduate student in Pure Math): "She wanted it"—a lot of guys will try to believe that even if she says she doesn't-- that "underneath" she does. Men are in a society that says men should feel more powerful than women, that women should be subjugate to them.

JK (a sophomore in Arts and Sciences): I think I used to believe that it was a mental-psychological thing, for someone to rape they must be sick, like a disorder they can't control. But you can control yourself—you are what you make yourself. I think it has more to do with the values you say you believe.

Mary: Do you think men see anything as entitling them to take sex?

JK (a sophomore in Arts and Sciences): I suppose if you are with someone for a long time.

MJ (graduate student in Pure Math): --"A lot of men think it is their right to, especially if they are in a long-term relationship—to control someone. The irony is that they want to control another human and are totally out of control themselves.

TM (senior in social work): Even young guys think that spending money means sexual favors.

Mary: Is there a pressure among males to “score” to the point where males could feel angry or belittled or inadequate if they don’t?

JK (a sophomore in Arts and Sciences): Oh yeah, it’s always there, like, in High school if you’re cool you have sex. Some guys take it to heart—they want to be liked, try to please others. You’ve got to overcome peer pressure—I mean, are you going to be your own man or follow what others say. Even in college, when you have a date, it all comes down to “did you score?”

MJ (graduate student in Pure Math): –“Oh yeah, pressure to “score” is the classic. Like constant voice shouting ‘you’ve got to get laid’. That’s why I gave away my virginity.

TM: That’s why I love being married. That pressure has shut up.

Mary: Do you feel there are things women could do to lower their risk of being victimized by this crime? ?

MJ (learn to understand the signals—men can misunderstand or misconstrue things. If a woman shows a lot of flesh, and holds herself a certain way—female sexuality is a very powerful thing. Be careful when you flirt—you are wielding something very powerful.

JK): I don’t think women should have to do anything differently, or worry about anything. They shouldn’t have to worry about drinking.

TM: Stick with people you know really well.

Mary: What do men think about rape and men who rape:

TM—I can’t understand it. It makes me sick.

MJ—Men will try to trivialize it. If you can make it trivial, you’re home free. Like, she really wanted it, it was no big deal, and then they can just forget about it. Many men want to rape, but only someone weak would act on it. A full human being can empathize with others, could put themselves in the place of the victim and control them self. A rapist would lose a piece of his humanity, would be less human. You’d have to go to a dark area, where you want to be god for a moment.

JK: You have to love by your values. Truth, courage, faith, power—these are mine.

Rape Facts

The U. S. Department of Justice reports, “In the past decade, concern over the sexual victimization of female college students has escalated.” (p. 1) ¹

In their extensive study (randomized among college women)

¹ The Sexual Victimization of College Women National Institute of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, (2000)

They reported that many women do not report or characterize their victimization as a crime for various reasons, such as embarrassment, because they do not want to define someone who assaulted them as a rapist, or because they do not know the legal definition of rape. Many women blame themselves. Nearly 5% of women are victimized in any given year, meaning over 4 years one-fifth to one quarter of the women may be assaulted. Similar numbers experienced attempted rape.

- Most victims knew offenders. 9 in 10 were known to victims and victims of attempted rape.
- The majority of rapes occurred in living quarters. (60% in victims' residence, 10 % in a fraternity, 31 percent in other living quarters. Off campus victimizations took place in bars, dance clubs and work settings. 0
- Analysis of their study – indicated that women who frequently drank enough alcohol to get drunk were at higher risk.

While K-State is (statistically speaking) safer than most campuses, we work with individuals who are victims of rape and attempted rape every year. When you consider that perhaps only one in ten victims of sexual assault reports the crime, in a year where “only” 3 or 4 rapes are reported, it may be inferred that dozens of individuals were criminally assaulted.

The circumstances that are common in the experiences of the K State women who come to the Women's Center and to Lafene seem to be :

- on a date or at a party with someone
- drinking
- a significant number appear to have been drugged (in the drink)
- many report to police but many do not

(While the victim may be male or female, the perpetrator is almost always a male).