

# **Measuring Rape Against Women: The Significance of Survey Questions**

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2004  
NCJ 199705

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Findings and conclusions of the research reported here are those of the author and do not represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

This project was supported under award 95-WT-NX-0001 from the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

Many thanks to Mary Koss, who presented this paper at the conference because the author's mother's emergency surgery caused her to cancel her travel plans at the last minute.

In the early 1980s, estimates of rape against women were derived from two primary sources, the nationwide crime victimization survey (the National Crime Survey [NCS]) and the “official” statistics from the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) (for exceptions, see Kirkpatrick and Kanin, 1957; Kanin, 1957; Kanin and Parcell, 1977; Russell, 1982). Scholars claimed, however, that these data sources substantially underestimated the true incidence of rape. UCR, for example, relied on reported crimes, but many rapes are not reported to the police. Two methodological reasons led NCS to underestimate rape. First, its definition of rape was considered too narrow because it included only carnal knowledge and, therefore, excluded “many acts within the scope of contemporary rape statutes, such as offenses other than penile-vaginal penetration” (Koss, 1996, p. 58). Second, critics contended that NCS was poorly designed to elicit reports of rape from interviewees who had in fact been raped (Gordon and Riger, 1989; Koss, 1992, 1993a, 1993b; Russell, 1982). The crux of this criticism was that NCS did not ask directly about rape (Eigenberg, 1990; Bachman and Taylor, 1994; Koss, 1993a, 1993b; Lynch, 1996a, 1996b). The critical issue was how to develop measurement strategies that would reveal the real extent of not only rape but also other forms of sexual victimization in American society.

Aware of the measurement limitations inherent in these two sources of rape estimates, Koss and her colleagues (Koss and Oros, 1982; Koss and Gidycz, 1985) built on Russell’s work (1982) and developed the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) to overcome the problem of underestimating the true extent of rape and other forms of sexual victimization. SES pioneered several methodological advances. It—

- ◆ Used legal statutes as a basis for developing measures of rape.
- ◆ Included “behaviorally specific” questions that used graphic language to describe the elements of the criminal victimization and to cue the respondents to recall experiences of victimization.
- ◆ Assessed a wide range of victimization (e.g., unwanted sexual contact, sexual coercion, and attempted and completed rape) (see Fisher and Cullen, 2000a).

Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski’s (1987) groundbreaking national-level study of college women was among the first studies to employ SES (see also Koss, 1985). Their study sparked the exponential growth of rape research that used the original or a modified SES to provide lifetime and annual rape estimates for various samples (e.g., navy recruits, precollege-age women) in specific situations (e.g., dating) (see Fisher and Cullen, 2000a). This body of research ignited a longstanding debate between feminist scholars and their critics over whether the extent of women’s rape is a true social problem or a misguided social construction of reality (see Fisher, Cullen, and Turner, 2000; Gilbert, 1997, 1995, 1994, 1992; Koss, 1996, 1992; Roiphe, 1993). In particular, critics contend, the definitions of rape and the survey questions used by SES to measure rape, are so broadly or poorly phrased that they “pick up” and count as rape a wide range of conduct, most of which could hardly be considered criminal in a legal sense. This is why many women who answer “yes” to questionnaire items purporting to measure rape do not, when asked subsequently in the same survey, report that they have been raped (Gilbert, 1992, 1994, 1995;

1997; compare with Koss, 1996, 1993a, 1993b, 1992). Consequently, the critics steadfastly have maintained that SES *overestimates* the extent of rape.

The measurement of rape has evolved into one of the leading issues in rape research. The debate about the measurement of rape has contributed to several methodological advances. First, several studies have examined the effects of different research designs, operationalizations of rape, and wording in survey questions. As a consequence, they have provided methodological explanations for why such widely diverging estimates of the level of rape occur (see Bachman, 2000; Lynch, 1996a, 1996b; Schwartz, 2000).

Second, the redesigned NCS—now called the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)—was administered in 1992. This survey addressed many of the methodological shortcomings inherent in NCS, such as the need for a broader definition of rape and the use of additional screen questions to uncover incidents of rape and sexual assault (Bachman and Taylor, 1994).

Third, Bachman (2000) statistically compared annual rape estimates from two different national-level studies: NCVS and the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS).<sup>1</sup> To do so, Bachman made NCVS “as comparable as possible” to NVAWS (Bachman, 2000, p. 839).<sup>2</sup> Given that the two studies were not originally designed to be compared, she could not make comparable several methodological eccentricities that other researchers have argued are reasons for diverging rape estimates (see Fisher and Cullen, 2000a). For example, NCVS uses a two-stage measurement process: screen questions and incident reports. An incident is classified into a crime category in the second stage (i.e., the incident report). In contrast, NVAWS uses a one-stage measurement process: behaviorally specific questions (see Tjaden and Thoennes, 1998). Despite the previously noted changes in NCVS, Bachman concluded that, “the NVAWS has a greater likelihood of capturing incidents of intimate-perpetrated rape . . . compared to the NCVS” (Bachman, 2000, p. 860). Her conclusion supports the critics who first argued that NCS, the precursor to NCVS, underestimates rape.

To date, there are no published studies designed to test how methodological differences among the surveys affect rape estimates (specifically, how rape is operationalized). One of the goals of the two projects described in this paper—the National College Women Sexual Victimization Study (NCWSV) and the National Violence Against College Women (NVACW) Study—was to use a quasi-experimental research design to compare self-reported rape estimates from two nationally representative samples of college women.

## **NCWSV and NVACW Research Designs**

Administrative decisions concerning the two studies created a unique opportunity to compare rape estimates generated from a quasi-experimental research design. This design addressed several methodological issues (e.g., sampling design, question wording) that previous scholars had speculated influenced diverging estimates of rape. Some attributes of the design were identical across the two studies, while others were manipulated so that they differed (see Fisher, Cullen, and Turner, 2000). Exhibit 1 details the research design attributes for NSVCW and NVACW.

**Exhibit 1. Overview Comparison of the National College Women Sexual Victimization Study and National Violence Against College Women Study**

<b>Research Design Attribute</b>	<b>National College Women Sexual Victimization Study</b>	<b>National Violence Against College Women Study</b>
<b>Sampling design</b>		
Sampling frame	4-year and 2-year institutions of higher education in the United States that had a total student enrollment of at least 1,000 students	4-year and 2-year institutions of higher education in the United States that had a total student enrollment of at least 1,000 students
Sampling design	Two stages: (1) stratified institutions of higher education by total student enrollment and location of school, and (2) randomly selected women enrolled in selected institutions of higher education	Two stages: (1) stratified institutions of higher education by total student enrollment and location of school, and (2) randomly selected women enrolled in selected institutions of higher education
Sample size: schools	233 institutions of higher education total: 194 4-year institutions of higher education and 39 2-year institutions of higher education	233 institutions of higher education total: 191 4-year institutions of higher education and 42 2-year institutions of higher education
Sample size: students	4,446	4,432
<b>Context of study in the cover letter</b>		
Title of survey	The Extent and Nature of Sexual Victimization of College Women	Victimization Among College Women
Description of study context	Unwanted sexual experiences that women may experience during college <sup>1</sup>	Criminal victimization that women may experience during college
<b>Interviewing</b>		
Survey firm	Schulman, Ronca, and Bucuvalas, Incorporated (SRBI)	SRBI
Interviewers	Professionally trained women	Professionally trained women
CATI	Yes	Yes
Average interview time	25.9 minutes	12.7 minutes
Field period	21 February 1997 to 5 May 1997	27 March 1997 to 14 May 1997
Response rate <sup>2</sup>	85.6%	91.6%
<b>Introduction to survey</b>		
Wording used in introduction to telephone interview	As you may recall, the purpose of the study is to better understand the extent and nature of criminal victimization among college women. Regardless of whether or not you have ever personally been victimized, your answers will help us to understand and deal with the problem of victimizations at your campus and nationally.	As you may recall, the purpose of the study is to better understand the extent and nature of criminal victimization among college women. Regardless of whether or not you have ever personally been victimized, your answers will help us to understand and deal with the problem of victimizations at your campus and nationally.
<b>Definition of rape</b>		
<b>Completed rape</b>	Unwanted completed penetration by physical force or the threat of physical force. Penetration includes penile-vaginal, mouth on your genitals, mouth on someone else's genitals, penile-anal, digital-vaginal, digital-anal, object-vaginal, and object-anal. <sup>3</sup>	Forced sexual intercourse, including both psychological coercion as well as physical force. Forced sexual intercourse means vaginal, anal, or oral penetration by the offender(s). This category also includes incidents where the penetration is from a foreign object such as a bottle. <sup>4, 5</sup>

Research Design Attribute	National College Women Sexual Victimization Study	National Violence Against College Women Study
<b>Attempted rape</b>	Unwanted attempted penetration by force or the threat of force.	Attempted forced sexual intercourse, including both psychological coercion as well as physical force.
<b>Threat of rape</b>	Threat of unwanted penetration with force and threat of force.	Threatened forced sexual intercourse, including both psychological coercion as well as physical force.
<b>Operationalizing rape</b>		
Measurement approach	Two stages: (1) screen questions and (2) detailed incident report	Two stages: 1) screen questions and 2) detailed incident report
Screen questions cueing strategy	Behaviorally specific	Short cue, direct, broad net
Incident questions	Multiple questions concerning (1) type of completed, attempted, and threatened penetration, and (2) physical force used or threatened with physical force	Multiple questions concerning (1) what actually happened, how attacked, how tried to attack, how threatened, and (2) clarification if raped, attempted to rape, or unwanted sexual contact with force
Reference period	Since school began in fall 1996	Since school began in fall 1996
Victimization Categorization criterion	Hierarchical scoring procedure	Hierarchical scoring procedure

<sup>1</sup> Examples, such as sexual harassment, stalking, and sexual assault, were provided.

<sup>2</sup> For both samples, we summed the total number of respondents completing the survey and the total number of respondents that were screened out and divided this figure by the total number of potential respondents contacted by SRBI.

<sup>3</sup> This definition for penetration is used by NCWSVS for attempted and threat of rape.

<sup>4</sup> This is the definition used in the National Crime Victimization Survey, see Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2000). *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1995: A National Crime Victimization Survey Report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, page 175.

<sup>5</sup> This definition for forced sexual intercourse is used by NVACWS for attempted rape and threat of rape.

## Sampling Design

The sampling designs employed in NCWSV and NVACW were identical (see exhibit 1, rows 2–5). The population included all 4-year and 2-year institutions of higher education that had a total student enrollment of at least 1,000 students. The sampling frame for both studies was provided by the American Student List Company.

Both studies used an identical two-stage sampling design. First, a total of 233 respective institutions of higher education were selected from 12 strata (3 categories of locations and 4 categories of total student enrollment). Institutions in each stratum were selected using a probability proportionate to the size of the female enrollment. Second, within each selected institution, female students were randomly selected. For each stratum, the sample size for institutions of higher education and students was determined based on a standard acceptable margin of error. The total sample size for NCWSV and NVACW is large—4,446 and 4,432 college women, respectively.

## Study Context: Informing Respondents

A cover letter was sent to each sample member at her school address approximately 2 weeks prior to a telephone interview (see exhibit 1, rows 7– 8) to inform her about the context of either the NCWSV or NVACW studies. Both the title and description of the two respective studies' contexts were worded somewhat differently in the cover letter. NCWSV referred to “unwanted

sexual experiences,” whereas NVACW referred to “criminal victimizations.” Other than these two wording differences, the content of the cover letters was the same. Each letter provided information about the sponsor of the respective study, whom to contact if the sample member had questions about the legitimacy of the study and/or wanted a copy of the results (e.g., an 800 number and e-mail address were provided), and indicated that participation was voluntary.

## **Interviewing**

Interviewing for both studies was conducted by female interviewers who were hired and professionally trained by Schulman, Ronca, and Bucuvalas, Inc., to administer the respective surveys using a CATI (computer assisted telephone interviewing) system<sup>3</sup> (see exhibit 1, rows 10–15). The two field periods overlapped, but were not identical. NCWSV’s field period began February 21, 1997, and ended May 5, 1997. NVACW’s field period started approximately 1 month later on March 27, 1997, and ended 9 days after the NCWSV’s, on May 14, 1997. The administration of the NCWSV survey took twice as long as the NVACW survey (26 minutes compared to 13 minutes).

Both surveys used identical wording in the introduction to the telephone interview, which interviewers read to all respondents, both those who had and had not recalled receiving the cover letter. After assessing whether the respondent had received the cover letter, if she agreed to participate in the respective study, and if she was eligible to participate,<sup>4</sup> the interviewers read the same introduction to NCWSV and NVACW respondents. In this introduction, interviewers also explained the context in which information about the respective victimizations was solicited (see exhibit 1, row 16).

## **Defining Rape**

Each study measured completed, attempted, and threatened rape (see exhibit 1, rows 18–20). In their definitions of rape, both studies include forced vaginal, anal, or oral penetration by the perpetrator(s), which could also include penetration from a foreign object. Both definitions of rape explicitly refer to physical force and the threat of physical force. The NVACW definition of rape also incorporates “psychological coercion.” Koss (1996) noted that this term “is probably meant to refer to verbal threats of bodily harm or rape, which are crimes” (p. 60). She further noted that it could also suggest verbal strategies to coerce sexual intercourse (e.g., continual nagging), which are undesirable but not crimes.

## **Operationalizing Rape**

There were similarities and differences in how rape was operationalized in the studies (see exhibit 1, rows 22–26). As with NCVS, these studies employed a two-stage measurement process that included screen questions and incident reports. Both studies asked a series of screen questions to determine if a respondent had experienced an act “since school began in the fall of 1996” that could be defined as a victimization. If the respondent answered yes, she was asked by the interviewer to complete an incident report for each time that experience happened. This report contained detailed questions about the nature of the incident. The incident report was used to classify the type of victimization that took place; that is, *responses* to questions in the incident

report—not the screen questions—were used to categorize the type of victimization, if any, that occurred.

Rape was operationalized differently in the NCWSV and NVACW surveys in two ways: the number and wording of the screen questions and the wording of the incident-level questions used to determine the type of incident. NCWSV substantially modified the NCVS format, most notably to include a range of 12 behaviorally specific sexual victimization screen questions (including one for stalking). A behaviorally specific question is one that does not ask simply if a respondent had been raped but rather describes an incident in graphic language that covers the elements of a criminal offense (e.g., someone “made you have sexual intercourse by using force or threatening to harm you . . . by intercourse I mean putting a penis in your vagina”) (see Fisher, Cullen, and Turner, 2000, exhibit 1). Each completed rape screen question asked the respondent about a different form of penetration in which force or the threat of harm was used. A statement defining the type of penetration followed each question. For example, anal sex is defined as “putting a penis in your anus or rectum.” The other screen questions provided examples of the types of behavior that respondents were asked about. The work of Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski (1987); Kilpatrick, Edmunds, and Seymour (1992); and Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) was influential in the development of the sexual victimization screen questions.

In contrast, NVACW used a format that was as closely aligned as possible with the survey format of NCVS. All seven individual-level screen questions used in the NVACW study came directly from NCVS, as did the incident-level questions used to determine what type of violent victimization the respondent experienced.<sup>5</sup> The NCVS screen question that specifically asked about whether a respondent “has been forced or coerced to engage in unwanted sexual activity” was employed, as were questions that asked about having something stolen or experiencing an attempted theft, being attacked, and being threatened (Klaus and Maston, 2000, p. 129). The former NCVS question does not include a behaviorally specific definition or example of “unwanted sexual activity.”

For each study, within an incident, the same categorization criterion was used—a hierarchical scoring procedure. An incident was categorized using the most serious type of victimization reported. For example, if in one incident two victimizations took place—for example, a completed rape and a simple assault or sexual coercion—the incident would be categorized as a completed rape.

The two studies also differed in how rape was operationalized within an incident report. The NCWSV study specifically asked about what acts were completed, attempted, and/or threatened. For each of these three degrees of behavior, respondents were asked multiple response questions to identify which type(s) of penetration they had experienced. After these questions, two questions asked whether physical force or threat of physical force was used. In contrast, if a respondent in the NVACW study indicated in any of the “what happened?” questions (e.g., what actually happened, how did the offender try to attack you, or how were you threatened) that an unwanted, forced sexual contact occurred, she was then asked if she meant forced or coerced sexual intercourse, including attempted intercourse. If she answered “yes,” the incident was categorized as a rape. Also, if the respondent indicated that the offender hit her, knocked her



down, or attacked her, and that among her injuries was rape or attempted rape, she was asked if she meant forced or coerced sexual intercourse, including attempts. The incident was then categorized according to one of three types of rape.

In sum, every effort was made to ensure that, aside from using different screen and incident report questions, the methodology used in NCWSV and NVACW was the same. To date, this is the strongest research design employed to examine how these two differences affect rape estimates.

## Estimates of Rape from NCWSV and NVACW

Past studies—mostly recently Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) and Bachman (2000)—have reported that studies using behaviorally specific questions generally find higher levels of sexual victimization than those reported by NCVS (see Crowell and Burgess, 1996). Examining exhibit 2, it is clear that the estimates for completed rape, attempted rape, and threats of rape from the NVACW study are statistically significantly lower than the estimates from the NCWSV study (see footnotes 2, 3, and 4).

**Exhibit 2. Estimates From the National College Women Sexual Victimization Study and the National Violence Against College Women Study**

Type of victimization	National College Women Sexual Victimization Study		National Violence Against College Women Study	
	Percentage of victims (C) <sup>1</sup> (n)	Rate of victimization per 1,000 female students (n)	Percentage of victims (C) (n)	Rate of victimization per 1,000 female students (n)
<b>Rape</b>				
Completed rape <sup>2</sup>	1.66 (1.29–2.04) (74)	19.34 (86)	0.16 (0.04–0.27) (7)	2.0 (9)
Attempted rape <sup>3</sup>	1.10 (0.80–1.41) (49)	15.97 (71)	0.18 (0.06–0.30) (8)	1.8 (8)
Verbal threat of rape <sup>4</sup>	0.31 (0.15–0.48) (14)	9.45 (42)	0.07 (-0.01–0.14) (3)	0.7 (3)

<sup>1</sup> The confidence interval (C) is based on a critical value of 1.96.

<sup>2</sup> Comparing the completed rape proportions from the two studies resulted in a  $Z = 248.41$ . Because the test statistic 248.41 exceeds the critical value of 1.96 ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ), there is a statistically significant difference between the two completed rape proportions.

<sup>3</sup>  $Z = 83.58$ . See note 2.

<sup>4</sup>  $Z = 28.81$ . See note 2.

The percentage of victims in the NVACW study who reported experiencing a completed rape was 10 times smaller than the percentage in the NCWSV study (0.16 percent compared with 1.66 percent). The NVACW attempted rape estimate was six times smaller than the NCWSV attempted rape estimate (0.18 percent compared with 1.10 percent). A similar pattern was evident for threats of rape: The NVACW estimate was four times smaller than the NCWSV estimate (0.07 percent compared with 0.31 percent).

What accounts for these differences? Given the other similarities between the two studies, it seems that the NCWSV study's use of a wide range of behaviorally specific screen questions accounts for the difference. Compared with the NCVS screen questions employed in the NVACW study, the use of a number of graphically worded screen questions in NCWSV likely prompted more women who had potentially experienced a sexual victimization to report this fact to the interviewer. Not all of those answering yes to a rape screen question were subsequently classified as rape victims based on their responses in the incident report (see Fisher and Cullen, 2000a).<sup>6</sup> Even so, it appears that behaviorally specific screen questions are more successful in prompting women who have in fact been sexually victimized to answer in such a way that they are then "skipped into"<sup>7</sup> the incident report by the interviewers on the victimization survey. Therefore, supportive of results reported by Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) and Bachman (2000), it seems likely that NCVS underestimates the true incidence of rape in the United States.

## **Conclusion**

Measuring rape (as well as other forms of sexual victimization) is a complicated and, to a degree, imperfect enterprise. According to Smith (1987, p. 185), it is the "biggest methodological challenge in survey research." The challenges are especially daunting when attempting to discern when, in an intimate encounter, a sexual advance crosses the line from imprudence to criminal behavior. But the salience of the methodology of measuring rape is intensified even further because the findings are integral to the ongoing debate between feminist and conservative scholars over whether the extent of women's rape is a true social problem or a misguided social construction of reality. No single study, including the comparison between NSVCW and NVACW, can fully resolve this debate. However, the comparison of these studies illustrates several points that are noteworthy for researchers and practitioners.

## **Implications for Researchers**

The results have four important methodological implications for the measurement of rape (and by extension, other forms of sexual victimization). First, the importance of behaviorally specific questions cannot be overemphasized, not necessarily because these questions produced larger estimates of rape, but because they use words and phrases that describe to the respondent exactly what behavior is being measured. Using behaviorally specific questions appears to cue more women to accurately recall what they experienced. The use of such questions is not by itself a panacea for addressing measurement error associated with estimating rape (and other forms of victimization), but it is a step forward in understanding how question wording affects self-report survey responses (see Fisher and Cullen, 2000a).

Second, drawing on the strength of NCVS, the two-stage measurement process—screen questions and incident report—appears promising in addressing measurement errors associated with a single-stage measurement process (see Fisher and Cullen, 2000a). For example, of the 325 incidents that screened in<sup>8</sup> on the rape screen questions, 21 could not be classified because the respondent could not recall enough detail; 59 were classified as “undetermined” because she refused to give an answer or answered “don’t know” to one or more questions in the incident report that would have allowed the incident to be categorized as a rape; 155 were classified as a type of sexual victimization other than rape; and 90 were classified as rape (completed, attempted, or threatened). The other 109 incidents classified as rape incidents screened in from the other sexual victimization screen questions (see Fisher and Cullen, 2000b). These results provide some understanding about how using only behaviorally specific questions would fail to count women whose recall is prompted by other types of screen questions. To date, we have only a preliminary understanding of what sources of measurement error the use of incident reports might introduce. Further research is needed on this issue. One avenue of research might consider how the use of structured qualitative questions that allow respondents to tell their own story helps us to understand the sources of measurement error in both behaviorally specific questions and the incident report.

Third, one other possible factor might have contributed to significant differences between the NCWSV and NVACW studies: the “context” of the two surveys (see exhibit 1, rows 7–8). It is plausible that the NCWSV respondents were sensitized to report a broad range of sexual victimization incidents, while NVACW respondents limited their reports to incidents they defined as criminal. If so, the contextual difference would mean that the NVACW study was measuring a much narrower domain of sexual victimization. One caution in this line of reasoning is that nearly half of the completed rape victims said yes when asked if they considered the incident as a rape. Even when the count of completed rape is limited to this group, the incidence of rape victims is still several times greater in NCWSV than in NVACW. The impact of the survey question context on respondents’ answers to sexual victimization questions warrants further methodological examination.

Fourth, to advance understanding of rape and other forms of victimization, comparative work employing experimental designs should not be overlooked. The strength of these designs allows researchers to manipulate sources of measurement error to measure their effects on estimates of rape and other types of victimization. At present, this type of research is still in its beginning stages and warrants further rigorous research.

### **Implications for Practitioners**

At first glance, some commentators might conclude that the risk of rape for college women is not high, with “only” 2.24 to 3.66 percent of women in the NCWSV experiencing a completed rape, attempted rape, or threat of rape in an academic year. Such a conclusion, however, would rest on a limited view of the study’s results and ignore its potentially disquieting implications.

The estimates from this study measure the victimization women experience for slightly more than half a year (6.91 months). Projecting results beyond this reference period is problematic because it rests on several assumptions (e.g., the risk of victimization is the same in the summer

months and stable over a person's time in college). With this caveat, it can broadly be stated that a 3.07-percent victimization figure, if calculated for 1 year, would mean that just over 5 percent (5.34 percent) of college women are victimized in any given calendar year. During the course of their college careers—which now last an average of 5 years—the completed/attempted/threatened rate for rape victimization might climb from one-fifth to more than one-quarter of the women in institutions of higher education.

From a policy perspective, college administrators might be disturbed to learn that, for every 1,000 women attending their institution, 45 incidents of completed, attempted, or threatened rape may occur in a given academic year (based on a victimization rate of 44.76 per 1,000 college women). For a campus with 10,000 women, this would mean the number of completed, attempted, and threatened rapes would be close to 450. On any one campus, and more broadly, when projected over the Nation's female population enrolled in institutions of higher education, these figures suggest that rape is a potential problem of large proportion and of public policy interest.

The U.S. Congress has maintained a steady interest in campus crime, passing legislation that requires Title IV-eligible institutions to collect and publish campus crime statistics and address the rights of victims of sexual crimes.<sup>9</sup> In 1999, Congress authorized monies for a national-level study of how these institutions respond to a report of sexual assault. The final report from this study, with its policy recommendation, was released in 2002 (see Karjane, Fisher, and Cullen, 2002). Congress also authorized several million dollars through the U.S. Department of Justice for selected institutions to design, implement, and evaluate innovative programs and policies to combat sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking. A national evaluation is under way to examine the implemented changes.<sup>10</sup>

These studies and evaluations represent new knowledge in an area of practice that is lacking in two basic dimensions. First, to date, little information systematically documents what is being done on college campuses to address rape and other forms of sexual victimization. Second, although several case studies exist, few rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of what institutions of higher education are doing to educate students about awareness, prevention, and reporting of rape and other forms of sexual victimization, or how effectively colleges respond to the report of a sexual assault (see Ottens and Hotelling, 2001). Together, this new information will help to fill the knowledge gaps in these two areas and shed light on “what works” to reduce rape and other types of sexual victimization within a college-student population.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Bachman (2000), page 860. For a comparison to NCVS, see Tjaden and Thoennes (1998).

<sup>2</sup> Bachman noted that several transformations and restrictions were performed in each dataset to make them “as comparable as possible” (p. 847). These transformations and restrictions included (1) selecting only respondents ages 18 years and older, (2) using only those victimizations that had occurred within the past 12 months from NVAWS, (3) using the bounded incidents obtained from NCVS that occurred in 1995, (4) using the series incidents as “*n*” according to the number of times NCVS respondents reported being victimized, (5) constructing different weights for each survey, and (6) using only incidents from NCVS involving one-on-one or lone-offender victimizations.

<sup>3</sup> Interviewers for both studies were trained in a general overview of interviewing (e.g., properly recording responses, CATI, callback protocol). Additional training was given that included properly asking sensitive questions and handling respondents who became emotionally upset as a result of the questions and/or memories evoked by the past experiences or who wanted to reschedule the interview. This included providing an e-mail address to the principal investigator so she could send local- and national-level victim services or counseling information via overnight mail to the respondent and/or an 800 number for a crisis services hotline.

<sup>4</sup> Only women who were currently enrolled at the school, enrolled since the fall 1996 term at the respective school, and employed less than full time at the school were eligible to participate.

<sup>5</sup> Some of the incident-level questions had to be modified to reflect the characteristics of a college sample. For example, locations where an incident occurred included such on-campus locations as a residence hall room and the library.

<sup>6</sup> Rape victims also have screened into an incident report based on answering yes to other sexual victimization screen questions (see Fisher and Cullen, 2000a). See note 8.

<sup>7</sup> This term is used in survey research when a specific response to a question (for example, a yes response) directs or “skips” the respondent into a series of questions that are different from the series that a respondent who responded no is directed into (skips into). In this example, if a woman said yes to any sexual victimization screen question, she then skipped into an incident report. If she said no to all of the screen questions (and hence did not have the experience), she did not skip into an incident report.

<sup>8</sup> The term “screened in” describes the purpose of a question—to cue respondents so that those who answer in a certain way (for example, say yes to a victimization screen question) skip into the appropriate series of questions. Hence, this type of question is called a screen question.

<sup>9</sup> Congress passed the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act in 1990. In 1992, Congress amended the act to include the Campus Sexual Assault Victim’s Bill of Rights. The 1998 amendments to the act officially changed its name to the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act and included, among other requirements, additional reporting obligations (see 20 U.S.C. § 1092).

<sup>10</sup> See Burt et al., 2001, *Evaluation of the STOP Formula Grants to Combat Violence Against Women, 2001 Report*, Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

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