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# **The Historically Black College and University Campus Sexual Assault (HBCU-CSA) Study**

**NIJ Grant No. 2007-WG-BX-0021**

**Final Report**

**Performance Period: August 1, 2007–November 30, 2010**

Prepared for

**The National Institute of Justice (NIJ)**

Prepared by

**Christopher P. Krebs, PhD**

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## ***Executive Summary***

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Sexual assault has a substantial impact on both victims and society. Victims of sexual assault may suffer both immediate and long-term physical and mental health consequences, including injury, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy (Holmes, Resnick, Kirkpatrick, & Best, 1996). Victims of sexual assault report increasing their visits to physicians by 18% the year of the assault, by 56% the year after the assault, and by 31% two years after the assault (Koss, 1993). Four out of five rape victims subsequently suffer from chronic physical or psychological conditions (American Medical Association, 1995), and rape victims are 13 times more likely to attempt suicide than persons who have not been crime victims and 6 times more likely than victims of other crimes (*Rape in America: A Report to the Nation*, 1992). Overall, rape is believed to carry the highest annual victim cost of any crime: \$127 billion (excluding child sex abuse cases). It is followed by assault at \$93 billion per year, murder (excluding arson and drunk driving) at \$61 billion per year, and child abuse at \$56 billion per year (Miller, Cohen, & Wiersema, 1996).

Given the substantial impact that sexual victimization has on individual victims and society, collecting information that advances our understanding of sexual assault, helps us prevent victimization, and better meets the needs of victims is critical. Although a considerable amount of research on sexual violence on college campuses has been conducted, very little of this research has involved historically black college and university (HBCU) students. As a result, there is a substantial gap in the literature and knowledge base about the magnitude of the problem, what is being done to reduce the problem, and what more can be done to prevent sexual violence and meet the needs of victims of sexual assault on HBCU campuses. The gap in research makes it difficult to fully understand the sexual assault experiences of African American students in general, given that almost 20% of African American baccalaureates receive their degree from HBCUs (Provasnik & Shafer, 2004).

RTI International was funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to conduct the HBCU Campus Sexual Assault (HBCU-CSA) Study. The HBCU-CSA Study was undertaken to document the prevalence—as well as associated personal and behavioral factors, context, consequences, and reporting—of distinct forms of sexual assault. This study also examines campus police and service provider perspectives on sexual victimization and student attitudes toward law enforcement and ideas about prevention and policy. Faculty, staff, and students at all four of the participating HBCUs, many of whom were women of color, played an invaluable role in ensuring that the study was culturally sensitive and would be well received by the population of undergraduate women at HBCUs. HBCU faculty, staff, and students collaborated with RTI on all aspects of the study including design, instrumentation, marketing and recruitment, and analysis and dissemination of findings.

In the HBCU-CSA Study, the term “sexual assault” includes a wide range of victimizations, including rape and other forms of unwanted sexual contact (e.g., sexual battery). Following the typology put forth in the previously conducted CSA Study, we classify sexual assault based on how the assault was

## The Historically Black College and University Campus Sexual Assault (HBCU-CSA) Study

### Executive Summary

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achieved. Virtually all sexual assault research distinguishes between assaults occurring as a result of *physical force or threats of physical force* and those that do not involve the use or threat of force. Similarly, in the HBCU-CSA Study, we consider physically forced sexual assault as a distinct category of assault. Another means through which sexual assault is achieved is *incapacitation of the victim*. Legal definitions of sexual assault factor in one's ability to provide consent, and individuals who are incapacitated because of the effects of alcohol or drugs (or otherwise incapacitated, such as when they are unconscious or asleep) are incapable of consenting. Incapacitated sexual assault can be broken down into three subtypes: alcohol or other drug (AOD)-enabled, drug-facilitated, and other incapacitated sexual assault. Drug-facilitated sexual assault (DFSA) is defined as unwanted sexual contact occurring when the victim is incapacitated and unable to provide consent after she has been given a drug without her knowledge or consent. If a woman experiences unwanted sexual contact when she is incapacitated and unable to provide consent because of voluntary consumption of alcohol or other drugs, we classify it as AOD-enabled sexual assault. Other incapacitated sexual assaults capture the remaining, and uncommon, situations in which a victim can be incapacitated, such as by being asleep or unconscious.

The HBCU-CSA Study addresses several gaps in the existing literature and makes a number of contributions to the field. It is the first to generate prevalence estimates of sexual assault on a collection of HBCU campuses and thus enable us to explore whether findings on sexual assault generated from the "general" population of undergraduate women are consistent with the experiences of undergraduate women attending HBCUs. Furthermore, it is among the first to explore in substantial detail the responses to sexual assault by campus law enforcement (as well as service providers) based on data gathered both from victims themselves and from law enforcement and service provider staff. Learning more about the extent to which sexual assault is reported among HBCU students, and the criminal justice and service provider response to such reporting, is extremely important so we can assess the efficacy of these responses and make necessary policy and practice changes capable of improving the services for victims and ultimately preventing sexual assault.

### ES.1 Methods

The HBCU-CSA Study involved conducting a Web-based survey of undergraduate women at four HBCUs. The HBCUs, which varied in terms of size, geography, and type (e.g., public or private), were selected based on existing collaborations, interest in participation, and institutional capacity for participation. Faculty, staff, and students at all four of the HBCUs designed, controlled, and delivered the information about the study, and they responded to inquiries from potential respondents. The HBCU-CSA Survey was administered in the fall of 2008; a total of 3,951 undergraduate women participated. The HBCU-CSA Study was reviewed and approved by RTI's Institutional Review Board (IRB), as well as the HBCU IRBs.

Undergraduate women from four HBCUs participated in this study. Registrars at the HBCUs provided sampling frames with demographic information on all undergraduate women enrolled for the fall 2008 semester. Initially, we randomly sampled women from each sampling frame and invited the women chosen to participate in the study, but when it became clear that response rates were going to be lower than anticipated, we eventually invited all undergraduate women at the four HBCUs to participate in the study. A nonresponse bias analysis was conducted, comparing respondents and nonrespondents on

dimensions of race, age, and year of study, generally, as well as within each of the four HBCUs. Observable differences between respondents and nonrespondents on these dimensions were negligible. Additionally, weights were used, which reduced all of the observed differences to 0.

The student survey was administered anonymously and included questions on demographics and other background information, alcohol and other drug use, health, dating, sexual assault victimization, and attitudes toward law enforcement and about sexual assault. After the last survey question was answered, respondents were presented with an informational module on sexual assault, which included sexual assault definitions, prevention advice, legal consequences of giving someone a drug without their knowledge or consent, and signs of drug ingestion. The students were then directed to a *separate* Web site (which opened up in a new window) to obtain their incentives (\$20 gift certification codes for Amazon.com).

The data collection methods for campus police and service providers were very similar to those used to collect data from HBCU students, in that respondents were recruited via their university e-mail addresses (receiving follow-up recruitment or reminder messages periodically) and that the survey was Web based. However, staff were given \$40 Amazon.com gift certificate codes for completing the survey, and the staff survey was not anonymous. The law enforcement and service provider survey included questions on demographic and other background information, prevalence of sexual assault, student reporting of sexual assault, the context of sexual assault, attitudes toward sexual assault, policies and practices, prevention activities, and recommendations.

## **ES.2 Results**

A variety of analytic techniques were employed to achieve the project goals. Descriptive analyses were conducted to familiarize ourselves with the data, assist in data cleaning and coding, and prepare for running multivariate models. We used frequency distributions, cross-tabulations, bivariate correlations, chi-squares, and t-tests to review large amounts of data, recognize patterns in the data, inform the recoding of some variables, inform the creation of derived variables, and plan for bivariate and multivariate analyses.

### **Prevalence Estimates of Sexual Assault Before and Since Entering College**

Of the 3,951 women, 14.9% reported experiencing an attempted or completed sexual assault before entering college and 14.2% reported experiencing an attempted or completed sexual assault since entering college. The prevalence of completed sexual assault is slightly higher than that of attempted sexual assault for incidents occurring both before and since entering college. The prevalence of physically forced sexual assault is higher for the time period reflecting experiences before entering college (8.7%) than those occurring since entering college (4.8%). In contrast, the prevalence of sexual assault occurring when the victim was incapacitated is higher for the time period reflecting experiences since entering college (6.2%) than before entering college (3.4%).

### **Risk Factors for Sexual Assault Since Entering College**

Three multivariate models were used to identify individual characteristics and behavioral risk factors that are associated with being a victim of three types of sexual assault: any sexual assault, forced





































































































































































