

# Sexual Assault Knowledge among Deaf and Hard of Hearing College Students

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## INTRODUCTION

### Problem Statement

Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) individuals were found to be at higher risk for sexual assault compared to their hearing peers

- 50 – 83% of Deaf individuals reported experiencing sexual assault in their lifetime
- Lack accurate sexual health knowledge
  - Sexual assault knowledge not previously measured among Deaf/HOH
- Accept rape myths at higher rates
- Disproportionate and insufficient access to sexuality education
- Informal sources of sexuality information have been shown to be primary resources
- Linguistic and cultural barriers to learning necessary skills

### Definitions I

- Consent: when both partners want to and agree to the sexual activity that is occurring--saying “yes”
- Sexual Activity: consensual sexual activity
- Non-consent: saying “no,” not saying “yes,” use of alcohol, being convinced, coerced, threatened, or forced to participate in sexual activity
- Sexual Assault: a wide range of unwanted, pressured, coerced, or forced sexual acts without the consent of a person
- Rape: force or incapacitation, non-consent, and sexual penetration

### Definitions II

- Survivor: a positive term used to empower victims of sexual assault or rape
- Offender (Perpetrator): a person who forced or coerced another to participate in sexual behaviors against their will
- Date Rape (Acquaintance rape): a rape committed by a person the survivor knew
- Sexual Assault Knowledge: sexual assault factual information
- Rape Myth Acceptance: attitudes and beliefs about rape, rape survivors, and rapists that are generally false yet widely and persistently held...creating a climate hostile to rape survivors

## METHODS

## Sampling Procedures / Data Collection

- Deaf and HOH undergraduate students at Gallaudet University
- Sample recruitment
  - Facebook announcements
  - Flyers in academic and residential buildings
  - Blackboard announcements
  - Booths set up with laptops
- Cross-sectional mixed methods (mainly quantitative) online survey via a nonprobability convenience sampling method

## Procedures

- Online survey through GoogleDocs
  - Completely anonymous
- Informed consent form
  - Required response to complete survey
- Readability of Instrument
  - Review by small group of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students to ensure comprehension
  - Revisions to instrument based on feedback from students

## Scales

- Sexual Assault Knowledge Scale
  - Facts regarding sexual assault information (12 scale items)
- Rape Myth Acceptance Scale
  - Attitudes regarding rape myths (16 scale items)
- Sexual Assault Experience Scale
  - Experiences of unwanted sexual activity (12 scale items)
- Sexual Activity Scale
  - Experiences of consensual sexual activity (4 scale items)

## RESULTS

## Demographic Characteristics

241 respondents

Demographics		n	%
Gender	Female	124	51
	Male	117	49
Age	18	8	3
	19	34	14
	20	29	12
	21	45	19
	22	30	12
	23-52	95	40
Year in College	0	3	1
	1	47	20
	2	61	25
	3	51	21
	4	45	19
	5-14	34	14
Ethnicity	White / Caucasian	156	64
	Black / African-American	39	16
	Asian / Pacific Islander	9	4
	Latino / Hispanic	26	11
	Native American / Alaskan Native	2	1
	Other	9	4
Sexual Orientation	Extremely Heterosexual	147	61
		25	10
		28	12
	Extremely Homosexual	19	8
	22	9	

## Sexual Assault Knowledge 1 and 2

Sexual Assault Knowledge 1	n	%	
A person who is drunk or under the influence of drugs can still give effective consent to any sexual activity.	Strongly Disagree	104	43
	Disagree	20	8
	Unsure	43	18
	Agree	47	20
	Strongly Agree	27	11
	<b>n = 74</b>	<b>31%</b>	

Sexual Assault Knowledge 2	n	%	
The best way to determine whether someone wants you to touch him or her is to touch the person, and then assess his or her reactions to your touch.	Strongly Disagree	50	21
	Disagree	49	20
	Unsure	74	31
	Agree	51	21
	Strongly Agree	17	7
	<b>n = 68</b>	<b>28%</b>	

## Sexual Assault Knowledge 3 and 4

Sexual Assault Knowledge 3		n	%
If two people have engaged in sexual activity before, one cannot sexually assault the other.	Strongly Disagree	97	40
	Disagree	48	20
	Unsure	52	21
	Agree	28	12
	Strongly Agree	16	7

Sexual Assault Knowledge 4		n	%
Spouses or partners cannot sexually assault each other.	Strongly Disagree	110	45
	Disagree	45	19
	Unsure	43	18
	Agree	22	9
	Strongly Agree	21	9

## Sexual Assault Knowledge 5 and 7

Sexual Assault Knowledge 5		n	%
A person is most likely to be sexually assaulted by someone s/he knows.	Strongly Disagree	13	5
	Disagree	22	9
	Unsure	73	30
	Agree	71	30
	Strongly Agree	62	26

Sexual Assault Knowledge 7		n	%
Approximately 50% of rapes are committed in or around the victim's / survivor's home.	Strongly Disagree	5	2
	Disagree	18	8
	Unsure	106	44
	Agree	70	29
	Strongly Agree	42	17

## Sexual Assault Knowledge 6 and 11

Sexual Assault Knowledge 6		n	%
A white woman is most likely to be raped by a white man.	Strongly Disagree	54	22
	Disagree	47	20
	Unsure	93	39
	Agree	30	12
	Strongly Agree	17	7

Sexual Assault Knowledge 11		n	%
After a sexual assault, victims / survivors may be very calm and controlled.	Strongly Disagree	71	30
	Disagree	59	24
	Unsure	75	31
	Agree	27	11
	Strongly Agree	9	4

- Little knowledge regarding these items

## Sexual Assault Knowledge 9 and 12

Sexual Assault Knowledge 9		n	%
Females aged 16-24 are more likely to be sexually assaulted than any other population group.	Strongly Disagree	3	1
	Disagree	13	6
	Unsure	63	26
	Agree	94	39
	Strongly Agree	68	28

Sexual Assault Knowledge 12		n	%
Only 10% of rapes are reported to the police.	Strongly Disagree	8	4
	Disagree	12	5
	Unsure	80	33
	Agree	86	36
	Strongly Agree	55	23

## Sexual Assault Knowledge 8 and 10

Sexual Assault Knowledge 8		n	%
1 in 4 women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime.	Strongly Disagree	4	2
	Disagree	8	3
	Unsure	76	32
	Agree	78	32
	Strongly Agree	75	31

Sexual Assault Knowledge 10		n	%
1 in 2 Deaf and HOH individuals will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime.	Strongly Disagree	6	3
	Disagree	12	5
	Unsure	111	46
	Agree	68	28
	Strongly Agree	44	18

## Rape Myth Acceptance 1 and 7

Rape Myth 1		n	%
A person who goes to the home or apartment of someone on their first date implies that s/he is willing to have sex.	Strongly Disagree	73	30
	Disagree	51	21
	Unsure	63	26
	Agree	34	14
	Strongly Agree	20	9

Rape Myth 7		n	%
If a person engages in making-out and s/he lets things get out of hand, it is her/his own fault if her/his partner forces sex on her/him.	Strongly Disagree	101	42
	Disagree	48	20
	Unsure	58	24
	Agree	17	7
	Strongly Agree	17	7

## Rape Myth Acceptance 3 and 4

Rape Myth 3		n	%	
One reason that people falsely report a rape is that they frequently have a need to call attention to themselves.	Strongly Disagree	30	12	n = 87 36%
	Disagree	31	13	
	Unsure	93	39	
	Agree	61	25	
	Strongly Agree	26	11	

Rape Myth 4		n	%	
Any healthy person can successfully resist a rape if s/he really wants to.	Strongly Disagree	58	24	n = 81 34%
	Disagree	29	12	
	Unsure	73	30	
	Agree	37	16	
	Strongly Agree	44	18	

## Rape Myth Acceptance 2 and 14

Rape Myth 2		n	%
Anyone can be raped.	Strongly Disagree	7	3
	Disagree	7	3
	Unsure	18	7
	Agree	44	18
	Strongly Agree	165	69

Rape Myth 14		n	%
A person who commits a sexual assault is motivated by sexual desire.	Strongly Disagree	31	13
	Disagree	29	12
	Unsure	67	27
	Agree	57	24
	Strongly Agree	57	24

## Rape Myth Acceptance 5 and 8

Rape Myth 8		n	%
People who get raped after hooking up with someone they just met get what they deserve.	Strongly Disagree	135	56
	Disagree	38	16
	Unsure	44	18
	Agree	15	6
	Strongly Agree	9	4

Rape Myth 5		n	%
When people wear sexy or revealing clothing, they are just asking for trouble.	Strongly Disagree	103	43
	Disagree	45	19
	Unsure	42	17
	Agree	32	13
	Strongly Agree	19	8

## Rape Myth Acceptance 6 and 10

Rape Myth 6		n	%
In the majority of rapes, the survivor/victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation.	Strongly Disagree	72	30
	Disagree	50	21
	Unsure	77	32
	Agree	26	11
	Strongly Agree	16	6

Rape Myth 10		n	%
Many people in the back of their mind wish to be raped, and may then without thinking set up a situation in which they are likely to be assaulted.	Strongly Disagree	100	41
	Disagree	28	12
	Unsure	71	29
	Agree	36	15
	Strongly Agree	6	3

## Rape Myth Acceptance 15 and 16

Rape Myth 15		n	%
When a person says "no," s/he really means "maybe" or "yes."	Strongly Disagree	168	70
	Disagree	35	14
	Unsure	24	10
	Agree	8	3
	Strongly Agree	6	3

Rape Myth 16		n	%
If a person DOESN'T say "no," resist, or fight back, it isn't rape / sexual assault.	Strongly Disagree	89	37
	Disagree	41	17
	Unsure	64	27
	Agree	29	12
	Strongly Agree	18	7

## Rape Myth Acceptance 9 and 11

Rape Myth 9		n	%
A person who is stuck-up and thinks s/he is too good to talk to someone on the street deserves to be taught a lesson.	Strongly Disagree	110	46
	Disagree	41	17
	Unsure	51	21
	Agree	30	12
	Strongly Agree	9	4

Rape Myth 11		n	%
If a person gets drunk at a party and has sex with someone s/he just met there, s/he should be considered "fair game" to other people at the party who want to have sex with her/him too, whether s/he wants to or not.	Strongly Disagree	124	52
	Disagree	39	16
	Unsure	51	21
	Agree	19	8
	Strongly Agree	8	3

## Rape Myth Acceptance 12 and 13

Rape Myth 12		n	%
How many people who report a rape would you say are lying because they are angry and want to get back at the person they accuse?	None	16	7
	Very few	74	31
	<b>About half</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>38</b>
	<b>Most</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>15</b>
	<b>All</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>9</b>

Rape Myth 13		n	%
How many reported rapes would you guess were merely invented by people who wanted to protect their own reputation?	None	24	10
	Very few	67	28
	<b>About half</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>39</b>
	<b>Most</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>19</b>
	<b>All</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>

## Sexual Activity

Experienced Sexual Activity with Consent		n	%
Fondling, Kissing, Touching, or Rubbing of Private Areas		220	91
Oral Sex		197	82
Vaginal Sexual Intercourse		183	76
Anal Sex		73	30

- Majority of respondents had engaged in consensual sexual activity (91%)
- Supported by previous research among Deaf and HOH college students
- The "hidden curriculum"

## Sexual Assault Experience

Experienced Sexual Activity WITHOUT Consent	n	%
Fondled, Kissed, Touched, or Rubbed Private Areas	112	47
Removed Her/His Clothing	81	34
Oral Sex	60	25
Vaginal Sexual Intercourse	54	22
Anal Sex	26	11
Attempted Oral Sex	63	26
Attempted Vaginal Sexual Intercourse	44	18
Attempted Anal Sex	35	15
Rape	47	20
Sexual Assault	77	32
Acquaintance Offender	113	47
Under the Age of 18	60	25

- Sample reported high rates of experiencing sexual assault
  - Considerably higher than rates found among hearing college students (almost double)
  - Similar to data reported among Deaf and HOH individuals in previous studies
- Considerably fewer respondents acknowledged their experiences as sexual assault

## Cronbach's Alpha Reliability

Scale	# of Items in Scale	$\alpha$
Sexual Assault Knowledge Scale	12	.68
Rape Myth Acceptance Scale	16	.88
Sexual Activity Scale	4	.66
Sexual Assault Experience Scale	12	.88

- All scales had acceptable Cronbach's Alpha scores

## Pearson Correlations of Composite Scores and Demographics

	Gender	Age	Year in College	Sexual Orientation	Ethnicity	Sexual Activity	Rape Myth Acceptance	Sexual Assault Knowledge	Sexual Assault Experience
Gender	1	-.026	-.039	-.205**	.036	-.056	.358**	-.295**	-.401**
Age		1	.320**	.005	.016	.113	.046	-.062	.061
Year in College			1	.031	-.001	.009	-.198**	.203**	.067
Sexual Orientation				1	-.047	-.103	-.113	.171**	.264**
Ethnicity					1	-.026	.198**	-.102	-.073
Sexual Activity						1	-.038	.052	.379**
Rape Myth Acceptance							1	-.558*	-.131*
Sexual Assault Knowledge								1	.258**
Sexual Assault Experience									1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

14 significant correlations: 13,  $p \leq .01$ ; 1,  $p \leq .05$

## DISCUSSION

## Sexual Assault Experience

- Deaf and Hard of Hearing female students were found to experience sexual assault at higher rates than Deaf and Hard of Hearing male students ( $r = -.40, p \leq .01$ )
- Students who had engaged in more consensual sexual activity had experienced sexual assault at higher rates ( $r = .38, p \leq .01$ )
- Gay and lesbian individuals experienced sexual assault at higher rates than straight individuals ( $r = .26, p \leq .01$ )

## Sexual Assault Knowledge

- Deaf and HOH females had higher sexual assault knowledge than Deaf and HOH males ( $r = -.30, p \leq .01$ )
- Gay and lesbian individuals had more sexual assault knowledge than straight individuals ( $r = .17, p \leq .01$ )
- Deaf and HOH students who had completed more years of college had more sexual assault knowledge ( $r = .20, p \leq .01$ )
- Students who had experienced sexual assault at higher rates had more sexual assault knowledge ( $r = .26, p \leq .01$ )

## Rape Myth Acceptance

- Respondents who had more sexual assault knowledge were less accepting of rape myths ( $r = -.56, p \leq .01$ )
- Deaf and HOH male students were found to be more accepting of rape myths than Deaf and HOH female students ( $r = .36, p \leq .01$ )
- White / Caucasian individuals were less accepting of rape myths than other ethnicities ( $r = .20, p \leq .01$ )
- Students who had completed fewer years of college were more accepting of rape myths ( $r = -.20, p \leq .01$ )
- Deaf and HOH individuals who had experienced sexual assault at higher rates were less accepting of rape myths ( $r = -.13, p \leq .05$ )

## Practical Implications I

- Implement sexual assault prevention programs and rape educational tools in all sexuality education programs on all school levels;
- Specific to sexual violence primary prevention programs, include: sexual assault attitudes, healthy relationships, consent, respect of personal boundaries, conflict resolution, and skills building;
- Ensure sexual assault information is age, language, and culture-appropriate;
- Develop clear definitions of sexual assault and rape to ensure that individuals will be able to acknowledge a sexual assault experience;
- Update sexual assault visual resources, materials, and sexuality curricula to include: videos, books, brochures, training and educational materials, computer programs, and learning tools;

## Practical Implications II

- Promote healthy behaviors and cultural norms;
- Change social environments concerning gender roles and expectations, rape myth acceptance, and perceptions of sexual violence;
- Target males, straight individuals, and all ethnicities with sexual assault and rape myth information;
- Utilize credible role-models for students to emulate;
- Refer to others' experiences of sexual assault, including speakers who are survivors of sexual assault—someone "just like them;"
- Make use of the "Deaf Grapevine" and credible Deaf leaders to circulate sexual assault and rape information within the community.

## Recommendations for Future Research

- Investigate sexuality education specific to rape and sexual assault on all school levels
  - Needs assessment: quality and content of sexual assault education
- Explore positive association between higher sexual assault knowledge and lower rape myth acceptance among those who reported experiencing sexual assault at higher rates
- Further examination of consensual sexual activity with sexual assault experience
- Replicate the study with hearing college students and compare the results

Thank You!

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