

# Dating violence: D

## Commit the crime; do the time

By Sarah Pendergraft  
Editor in Chief

In America, the country with the highest published rape statistics, 78 women are raped every hour, 1,872 each day, 56,160 each month, and 683,280 each year. Only 16% of these assaults are reported to the police, even though convicted rapists face three to five years in prison.

It is estimated that one in twelve male college students has committed acts that are legally defined as rape, but 84% believed that their actions were positively not rape. The definitions of "rape" are, however, very specific.

Having sexual intercourse with someone who is either mentally incapacitated or physically helpless is rape. Victims unable to evaluate their conduct or resist any sexual act committed upon them are considered mentally incapacitated.

Physically helpless victims are either unconscious, unable to resist sex physically, or unable to communicate willingness to have sex.

It is second degree rape, and a Class C felony to engage in sexual intercourse with someone you know to be mentally incapacitated or physically helpless. Drugs and alcohol play a major role in many rapes of this nature. 75% of men and 55% of women involved in acquaintance rape had been drinking or using drugs.

Rohypnol, also known as "the date-rape drug," is an inexpensive drug, costing between one and five dollars a pill. Combined with alcohol, the drug can knock a user out for eight to nine hours and leave them with no memory recall. Many men who had sex with women who were high on rohypnol have been convicted of rape. SRO Robinette said, "The scariest thing about them (rohypnol pills)

is that they don't look and different than over-the-counter drugs. They can be crushed up and dissolved in a drink with no trace."

The drug comes into the country from Mexico and Columbia, and, on some occasions, Americans are able to bring three month supplies into this country, claiming that it has been prescribed to them as a cure for insomnia. Over 60 countries allow the sale of rohypnol for insomnia patients.

Robinette added, "The reason we know it (rohypnol) is in town is that a member of the vice-narcotics squad made an undercover buy."

Statutory rape is a class B felony, and first degree rape. Having vaginal intercourse with a child under 13 if you are at least 12 and four years older than the victim is statutory rape, and is illegal even if the sex is consensual. 61% of rape victims are less than 18 years old.

Forcing another person to have sex while employing or displaying any weapon is first degree rape, as is forced intercourse that inflicts serious personal injury on the victim, or acting as a group and raping a victim. People convicted of a Class B felony can be sentenced to spend between three and a half to 25 years in prison.

Almost nine in ten rapes are never reported because the victims feel too much shame, feel that they may not be believed, or are threatened by the assailant. In a survey of victims who did not report a rape, 43% did so because they thought that nothing could be done.

When cases are brought to trial, convictions are often difficult to come by, and most rapists spend less than four years in prison. However, in recent years, as awareness levels have risen, so has the number of reported rapes.

## Low self-esteem precipitates abuse

By Nikia Jones  
Staff Writer

"Where were you," John yelled. "I was at the movies," said Lisa. "With who? You're seeing someone else aren't you?" he fiercely asked. "No, I'm not." He vehemently yelled "You're lying to me," while shoving her against the door. "You're hurting me," Lisa whimpered. "If you cared about me, then you wouldn't lie to me. You don't love me. You're no good," said John.

This is just one possible conversation that might take place in an abusive relationship. Research shows that the highest percentage of dating violence tends to occur among couples ranging between the ages of 16 to 21. Evidence indicates that there are many more abusive couples existing today than in the past. Dating violence can occur in urban, rural and suburban settings and does not discriminate between any class or race.

Dating violence in the form of physical and emotional abuse devastates its victims, making them live in fear of losing or leaving their partners. Opinions vary on what constitutes abuse. "Simply, dating violence equals abuse. It may harm you internally and externally in the present and in the long run," said Karen Lane, a junior.

An abuse victim searches within to figure out what provoked the attack. The victim tries to comprehend the violence in terms of his or her own behavior and tries to see guilt. Blaming oneself is what keeps many victims attached to the abusive partner. "A girl should not remain with an abusive boyfriend. Girls make excuses for their boyfriends actions because they are blinded by what they think is love," said Rubaiya Talukdar, a senior.

Many doctors say a degree of psychological security exists in being abused. The message it gets across is the person is no good and deserves to be abused. "No one deserves to be abused. It solves no problems," said Talukdar.

"Any relationship can be abusive if one doesn't share love and respect for the other," said Shera Seigla, a senior. Emotional abuse takes the form of criticism and verbal attacks resulting in feelings of worthlessness. "A violent relationship is not surrounded by love. It is not healthy for physical or mental aspects of a person," said Lane.

According to psychologists, there are many rea-

sons why dating violence occurs. One reason is the victim's and the attacker's self-worth is damaged. Physically they may appear sure and confident, while inside they constantly put themselves down. Natalie Miller, a senior, said, "People are more prone to be attracted to the wrong person if they have low self-esteem. They are looking for someone to provide the stability they cannot provide for themselves no matter what the consequences are."

Research proves that these dreary self-portraits originate in childhood. For many people involved in violent relationships, their parents were abusive. Therefore, abuse seems normal to them.

Young, abusive men repress their feelings of worthlessness and insecurity by masking them with bravado. Because his sense of self comes from outside and not within, an insult or perceived threat may trigger him to violence. Many women with no self-worth are terrified of being alone and believe they are nothing without a man. So they search for love and are willing to settle for any relationship, abusive or not.

In a 1990 survey in Minnesota, nearly a quarter of high school students surveyed admitted to having had at least one experience in dating violence. 50% of girls reported their partner had either pushed, grabbed, or shoved them. 25% said they were kicked, bitten or punched, and around 4% were threatened with a gun or knife. The boys who were questioned said their actions were of anger, confusion, and feelings of love. "Love needs nourishment. An abusive relationship will only destroy the little love the two people have," said Lane.

On the other hand, there are positive parts of a violent relationship in the eyes of the victims. No relationship is violent all the time they say. What takes place in between violent episodes is often extremely satisfying.

The influences of T.V. and movies along with gender stereotypes that women are weak and fragile and men are forceful and dominant have led some to falsely believe that abuse is socially acceptable. "When a person knows he/she is violent, the individual wants to justify it and some movies may give them that justification," said Talukdar. Some warning signals for an abusive mate are: agitation, nervousness, snappiness, and a steady, more intense, growing pattern of verbal arguments.

Dating violence begins with the first incident of abuse. The event itself may be an argument over even the smallest, trivial thing. Later, the couple may not

remember what triggered that first fight, only that it shocked them. The woman feels betrayed and hurt while the man feels shame and guilt.

Many feel that once violence begins it goes on until one partner takes the initiative to step back and re-examine the situation. Reality surfaces when violence gets so bad, one person fears he/she may be killed. "When a person takes the time to examine the problem, he/she actually thinks of ways to make the situation better instead of using violence which only makes it worse," said Harper.

Here are some tips from

doctors on saving yourself if in a violent relationship: talk to someone you trust, such as a parent, counselor, teacher, or friend. Don't keep your abuse a secret. If you feel you can't talk to anyone you know, call the

Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network at 800-656-HOPE. Do not blame yourself. No one deserves to be hit. Set up a plan to get away with the help of friends or family. Leave your partner unless he/she begins seeing a counselor to learn how to control his/her rage. Most importantly, don't give up! "The first step to end the violence is recognizing that the person is doing something wrong. Self-examination will allow the person to gain more self-esteem, confidence, and find alternatives to violence," said Talukdar.

Most people see relationships as focusing on love, not violence. A bumper sticker, which was popular 20 years ago, but sheds light on dating violence, reads "Make love, not war." "If violence is what love is about, you need to reconsider your definition of love. If someone loves you they will not hit you," said Miller.

