Summary of the Third Survey of Students' Attitudes, Experiences, and Responses to Sexual Experiences

In a project supported by Grant No. 2005-WA-AX-0004, awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice, the www.tcnj.edu/antiviolence website serves as a forum for disseminating information to faculty, students, staff, and visitors. By improving access to pertinent information, issues of sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, and stalking can become a part of the campus discourse, increase awareness, and demonstrate the College’s intention to address these issues directly. Points of view in the following document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

I. History of Research at TCNJ:

- The Sexual Assault Task Force (SATF) at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), commissioned by President R. Barbara Gitenstein, conducted in spring, 2002, an assessment of TCNJ attitudes toward, experiences of, and responses to unwanted sexual experiences. This assessment served as a campus needs assessment to inform the development of a new campus prevention and intervention campaign and a baseline against which to document campaign effectiveness.

- A follow-up assessment was conducted in spring, 2005, to again assess TCNJ attitudes toward, experiences of, and responses to unwanted sexual experiences. A sample of 338 TCNJ students (67% females, 33% males) participated in the follow-up assessment.

- A third assessment was conducted in spring, 2008, to assess students’ attitudes, experiences, and responses to sexual experiences. A sample of 152 TCNJ students consented to participate; however, four students did not complete the survey resulting in an N = 148 (76% females, 24% males).

II. Summary of 2008 Pilot Study Findings:

Homophobic Comments
On average, 60.8% of participants reported being subjected to homophobic comments (sometimes-very often) from other TCNJ students, and 4.8% from faculty/staff. Participants reported being subjected to sexist comments 42.6% (sometimes-very often) from other TCNJ students, and 8.9% from faculty/staff. There were no significant differences between males and females or underclassmen and upperclassmen regarding the campus climate.

Alcohol Consumption
Approximately 28% of the participants, especially males, reported drinking more frequently per week, binge drinking more per week and experiencing intoxication more frequently per week than females. Males also reported that their friends drank more frequently, binge drank more, and experienced intoxication more frequently per week than their female counterparts; however, there were no statistically significant differences between males and females. Alcohol data examined by class
year revealed that upperclassmen drank more frequently per week (33.8%) than did underclassmen (22.6%); however, underclassmen binge drank more per week and experienced intoxication more frequently per week than their upperclassmen counterparts. Upperclassmen also reported that their friends drank more frequently (54.6%), than underclassmen (52.1%). Again, underclassmen reported that their friends binge drank and experienced intoxication more frequently per week than upperclassmen; however, there were no statistically significant differences between underclassmen and upperclassmen. While there are no statistical differences, it is important to note that nearly one-fourth of underclassmen drink at least once or more per week.

Sexual Victimization
The highest prevalence of sexual victimization activity was ATTEMPTED intercourse facilitated by drugs or alcohol (15.5%, M=14.3%, F=15.9%). Nearly 11% (M=2.9%, F=13.3%) of participants felt pressured to have sex when they did not want to due to continual arguments; this represents a slight increase from 2005 data (8.4%). The number of participants who were in a situation in which their partner was so sexually aroused they felt it was useless to stop (9.5%) also decreased from 2005 (11.4%), as did participants who were in situations where PHYSICAL FORCE was used but intercourse did not occur, 4.7% in 2008, compared to 5.5% in 2005. Cautious interpretation of statistics is warranted due to the small subsample sizes.

- Follow-up questions were asked of participants who responded positively to sexual victimization questions. Of those who reported ATTEMPTED intercourse facilitated by drugs or alcohol (15.5%), 36.3% of the respondents indicated that these events took place on-campus in a residence hall. Of those who felt pressured to have sex when they did not want to due to continual arguments (10.8%), 58.8% of participants indicated that these events took place on-campus (52.9% in a residence hall). Those participants who reported they were in a situation, in which their partner was so sexually aroused they felt it was useless to stop, indicated that the majority of these incidents also happened on-campus in a residence hall. Participants who reported unwanted sexual intercourse facilitated by drugs/alcohol indicated that 50% of these events occurred on-campus; however, there was no common location. Regarding cases in which PHYSICAL FORCE was used, the majority of respondents reported that these events occurred off-campus.

- Follow-up questions for those who responded positively to sexual victimization questions, asked about bystander intervention, follow-up treatment (medical, nursing, emergency birth control), and reporting. In several events, participants indicated that there was someone around to intervene; however, few individuals actually did intervene during these various sexual victimization experiences. Few participants
reported receiving medical/nursing treatment or emergency birth control; however, this may be a reflection of the fact that NONE of the participants who reported sexual victimization reported their experiences to police. This may be a result of participants minimizing their experiences, psychological trauma, stigma, or fear of becoming involved with the legal system.

- Follow-up questions regarding prior victimization indicate that most participants (both males and females) experienced victimization within the last 8 years. Of those reporting unwanted or uninvited touching prior to Fall 2007, 52.8% indicated these events occurred from 2004-2006, and males were the perpetrators in 86.2% of the cases. Fifty-percent of participants who reported being verbally pressured into sexual intercourse or sexual contact prior to Fall 2007, indicated these events occurred from 2004-2006, and males were the perpetrators in 90.3% of the events. Finally, of those who reported they had been subjected to stalking/harassing behaviors prior to Fall 2007, 63.3% reported these incidents occurred from 2004-2006, and 94.7% of the perpetrators were reported as male.

- Questions asked of TCNJ female participants based on the Sexual Victimization of College Women (SVCW) Survey, indicate that nearly 20% of TCNJ women have experienced unwanted or uninvited touching of a sexual nature since fall 2007. This included forced kissing, touching of private parts, grabbing, fondling, and rubbing up against someone in a sexual way, even if it was over their clothes. Unwanted or uninvited touching was the highest prevalence reported by TCNJ female participants. Eight-percent of female participants reported that someone threatened or tried but DID NOT succeed in any type of penetration. Less than 2% of participants responded positively to experiencing other types of sexual assault or sexual coercion.

**Stalking/Harassment**
Fourteen percent of participants reported they experienced stalking/harassment behavior, and this behavior was reported more by females (16.8%) and underclassmen (16.9%).

**Perpetration**
The prevalence of perpetrating any type of unwanted sexual contact was extremely low. The highest prevalence for those instigating unwanted sexual contact (3.4%), was from participants who reported being so sexually aroused they could not stop themselves even when their partner wanted them to stop. Interestingly, only females (4.4%) reported instigating this unwanted sexual behavior, and more upperclassmen (5.2%) versus underclassmen (1.4%) engaged in this behavior.

**Researcher Recommendations**
1. Continued educational efforts, including targeted programs for higher-risk subgroups (e.g., reinforcing sexual assault prevention efforts off-campus for upperclassmen, education regarding resources on-campus available to underclassmen and campus residence halls).

2. Programs to facilitate bystander intervention. Recent studies derived from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) indicate that the presence of a bystander is the second most powerful protective factor predicting the avoidance of a completed rape when a woman is attacked by a single individual (Banyard, Moynihan, & Plante, 2004; Banyard, Plante, & Moynihan, 2005; Clay-Warner, 2002). Research indicates that the presence of a bystander makes a completed rape 44% less likely (Clay-Warner, 2002).

3. Continued efforts to facilitate reporting of sexual victimization and follow-up treatment.

4. Educational and prevention efforts focusing on intimate partner violence (IPV) and dating violence.

5. Education about stalking/harassing behaviors and how and where to report these incidents.

6. Continued marketing of both on-campus and off-campus sexual victimization resources for students (e.g., OAVI, Womanspace, and the ICAN network).

7. Reinforcement of alcohol (ETOH) policies on-campus.

8. Repeating the assessment in another year (or two) with a larger sample.

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References

