Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention

Peter S. Hovmand, Ke Zhou, Autumn Asher, Katie Chew, Sarah Pritchard, Shih-Ying Cheng, Jill Kuhlberg, & Patrick Fowler
Washington University in St. Louis

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Overview

1. Background to the problem of relationship and sexual violence prevention on university campuses and Washington University’s response

2. Structural violence and then need for new methods

3. Conceptual individual level model of resilience in response to insults

4. Next steps and future work
Timeline

2009

Center for Violence and Injury Prevention

- VTB project (Matthieu, Co-PI)
- Scriptapedia

2011

Dear Colleague letter (April ‘11)

2014

Sexual Assault and Relationships Violence Task Force

- Policies and Processes
- Prevention and Education
- Support and Advocacy
- Assessment

2015

Launch of Relationship and Sexual Violence Assessment Initiative

2016

Release of AAU campus climate survey (Sep ‘15)
Lifetime prevalence of sexual assault by age and gender for persons who have attended college (N=9,079) from analysis of National Violence Against Women (NVAW) survey
Lifetime prevalence of partner physical assault by age and gender for persons who have attended college (N=9,079) from analysis of National Violence Against Women (NVAW) survey
Rationale

• With close to 50 percent of the US population attending four-year institutions, *prevention systems* that show a demonstrated reduction in sexual assault and relationship violence *could have significant population health impact.*

• Universities have an *innovative role* in prevention of sexual assault and relationship violence in other communities
  • Data on population and services
  • Dynamic population
  • University as a “testbed” for *designing* and demonstrating an adaptive prevention system
Goal: To **develop a comprehensive assessment** system for the prevention and response to campus sexual assault and relationship violence.

Specific aims:

1. **Form transdisciplinary research teams** to develop innovative solutions to prevention and response to campus sexual assault and relationship violence;

2. **Develop scalable methods** for a comprehensive campus sexual assault and relationship violence public health surveillance and evaluation of prevention and response programs and policies;

3. **Train the next generation** of public health prevention specialists, direct service providers (e.g., counselors, doctors), advocates and civic leaders to create community systems that prevent and respond more effectively to sexual assault and relationship violence at the community level.
Structural violence as systemic patterns

When one husband beats his wife there is a clear sense of personal violence, but when one million husbands keep one million wives in ignorance there is structural violence.


Violence as systemic, distributional versus structural injustice, and concept of thrownness of social groups.

Need for methodology (methodology = *study of* methods)
Two major methodological problems in studying relationship and sexual violence

• Time delays ➔ right censoring of data and biases in underreporting

• Dynamics of identity labels ➔ biases in reporting and assessing risk of marginalized populations
  
  • Constructs tied to vulnerability and risk changing quickly in a dynamic population

• Hence, missing data and not missing at random
Time delays in recognizing and self-reporting victimization experiences (i.e., right censoring)

Increase probably due to distribution of respondents’ ages

Decrease, however, is probably due to censoring as a result of being in an abusive relationship, i.e., under-reporting

Data from NVAW survey
Scientific discourse relies on understanding labels as immutable

Understanding how labels change (“looping effect”)

Changing social norms, process of crescive legitimation

Dynamics of identity and labels (i.e., not missing at random)

Scientific discourse often relies on understanding labels as immutable and categorical. When spectrums of sexual identities are examined, it becomes clear that mechanisms for changes in labels are necessary. One proposed mechanism for how labels change in their meaning, and shape those who are labeled, is the looping effect, described by Ian Hacking (1995a). However, this mechanism does not account for the importance of individuals’ experience and feelings in the labels that apply to them and that they choose. Feelings under dynamic description describes how emotions are constrained and created by the descriptions they are given and how feelings that arise outside of the accepted boundaries can prompt a new label. When the scientific immutable–categorical perspective, the looping effect, and feelings under dynamic description are each applied to the asexual continuum of identities, the necessity of understanding the bottom-up process of feelings under dynamic description becomes clear. The asexual continuum, currently comprising asexual, gray asexual, demisexual, and allosexual, spans the variations of sexual attraction one might feel for others, from no sexual attraction to others to consistent understanding and endorsement of the feeling of sexual attraction to others. Given that these identities are defined by the degree to which sexual feelings are lacking, it is an ideal case to explore how descriptions of feelings interact with the feelings themselves, not only creating new labels but also shaping the associated emotions.

Public Significance Statement

This article describes a new concept: feelings under dynamic description, or how do the labels we use for our feelings shape the feelings we have, and how do those feelings change the words we use for them. By better understanding how the labels we use for feelings can change, we can understand how people change, too.

Keywords: feelings under dynamic description, asexuality, looping effects, scientific immutable–categorical labels

The way a question is asked shapes the answer it receives. In the most obvious example, if a force-choice question is asked, the information is limited to those options. The limits to that data then shape the conclusions, conclusions shape future research, and research shapes discussions. Much of research into mental illness has been categorical, for methodological ease (i.e., the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The categorical approach is not limited to mental illness; people are classified in many different ways for demographics, and these labels are often used as discrete and immutable categories (e.g., race and ethnicity; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Although this is especially obvious in force-choice survey questions, it is true for all aspects of the social sciences: When studying people, the ways in which research questions are framed, data are gathered, and conclusions are drawn, are shaped.
Ways to think about mathematical modeling

Like an engineer

*How do we solve a problem?*

E.g., Petroski (2011); Simon (1996)

As a basic natural scientist

*How do we explain natural phenomena?*

E.g., Newtown (1686); Lakatos (1970); Meehl (1990)
Two types of propositions in mathematical modeling in a progressive program of research

1. **Conjectures**
   Statements about what is logically entailed by the assumptions of the model of a theory (what does the model “say”?)
   - Explored and verified through computer simulation
   - Testing the dynamic hypothesis in system dynamics

2. **Hypotheses**
   Statements logically implied by the model that can be empirically tested
   - Comparing statements entailed by a model against empirical reality

System dynamics simulation modeling

1. Macrosystem view of population, risk, prevention, and response

2. Microsystem view of individual trajectories

https://tinyurl.com/y75d7gsn

https://tinyurl.com/y9f6jaua
Different responses to insults

Example of an individual factual-counterfactual comparison

![Graph showing wellness over months with different conditions]
As frequency of microaggressions increases, perceived impact *decreases* while cumulative impact *increases*.
Using the model to generate synthetic data for developing and testing innovative resource allocation algorithms

Next steps and future directions

• Using model to design/test research evaluation designs
  • Brown School Evaluation Center leading effort to develop RSVP program evaluation plan for prevention and response

• Educational supports for P-12
  • Addressing capability traps in Tier 1, 2, and 3 needs and services

• AAU Campus Climate Survey
  • 27 institutions
  • Sampling size of 779,170 with 196,984 responses

• Extend to design of a more general diversity and inclusion model
Your invited!

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Keynote speaker:
Jody O’Sullivan
Professor & Dean of the UMSL/Wash U Joint Undergraduate Engineering Program and The Samuel C. Sachs Professor of Electrical Engineering

Agenda:
1-2 PM Keynote
2-3 PM Developing a Comprehensive Evaluation Plan
3-4 PM Poster Session

For more information about RSV-AI: contact Peter Hovmand, PHD, MSW (phovmand@wustl.edu) or Sarah Pritchard, MSW/MPH (sarahpritchard@wustl.edu) or visit https://publichealth.wustl.edu/relationship-and-sexual-violence-assessment-initiative/