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## **Why Don't Rape and Sexual Assault Victims Report? A Study of How the Psycho-Social Costs of Reporting Affect a Victim's Decision to Report**

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# **Why Don't Rape and Sexual Assault Victims Report?**

## **A Study of How the Psycho-Social Costs of Reporting Affect a Victim's Decision to Report**

**Ariella Kahn-Lang<sup>1</sup>**

**Washington University in Saint Louis Economics Honors Thesis**

### **ABSTRACT**

Sexual assault and rape are among the least reported crimes in the United States. This paper hypothesizes that this reflects the psycho-social costs of reporting a rape or sexual assault, which, in turn, reflect the stigma suffered by rape and sexual assault victims. These costs will be highest among those most likely to be rejected by their social and professional circles if they report their victimization, and among those for whom such rejection is likely to be most costly. Using the National Crime Victimization Surveys, I proxy these higher costs by victim's education and income, relationship to the assailant, and various measures of the nature of attack and attacker. I find that, as hypothesized, victims with higher incomes, more years of education, and a closer relationship with the attacker are less likely to report. These results are either absent or weaker in an identical analysis of the reporting of non-sexual assaults, confirming that the relations I observe are due to the unique nature of rape and sexual assaults.

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Numerous surveys and polls have shown that between one in three and one in six women will be the victims of rape or attempted rape in their lives. Additionally, although there are lower rates of male victimization, men are far from immune from being raped or sexually assaulted (Finkelhor, 1990; Ellsberg, Heise and Gottemoeller, 2000; Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, 2006). However, only a small fraction of these rapes and sexual assaults will ever be reported to the police and an even smaller percent will end with a conviction (Edmunds, Kilpatrick and Seymour, 1992; Horney and Spohn, 1991). In fact, rape is one of the least reported of all violent crimes in the United States (Williams, 1984). As with any crime, the under-reporting of rape breaks down the system of crime and punishment, therefore weakening the deterrence effect of potential judicial sanctions (Ehrlich, 1973). Furthermore, the under-reporting of rape and sexual assault allows the epidemic of rape to go relatively unnoticed by the majority of society.

In understanding the under-reporting of rape and sexual assault, one must recognize the unique position of the victim. The victim of a rape or sexual assault possesses a rare commodity, the knowledge of the crime (Allen, 2007). In most rape and sexual assault cases there is little physical evidence to prove that there was an assault or to differentiate the assault from consensual sexual activity. Consequently, in any rape case, the outcome of the trial is highly dependent on the testimony of the victim. Therefore, victims rely heavily on their own credibility in the eyes of the public. In reporting a rape, victims are opening themselves up to society's judgment and public scrutiny of their stories.

This study attempts to evaluate how the unique costs of reporting affect a sexual assault or rape victim's decision to report. These unique costs are caused by victims' awareness of our society's tendency to blame victims of sexual assault and rape for the incident. Consequently, by reporting the crime, victims of sexual assault risk jeopardizing social circles, career opportunities, and the general respect of society. This study hypothesizes that victims will consider the unique psycho-social costs of reporting and will be less likely to report an incident when they have more at stake. Using data from the National Crime and Victimization survey, factors describing a victim's quality of life, relationship with the perpetrator, and social environment are evaluated as to their effect on the victim's decision to report. The analysis confirms that victims with higher quality of life, as measured by higher incomes and more years of education, are less likely to report their victimization. Sexual assaults and rapes perpetrated by partners, friends, coworkers, and customers are less likely to be reported. There are also significant differences in rape reporting by race, gender, and marital status. To confirm that these findings are truly unique to rape and sexual assault, I compare reporting by rape and sexual assault victims to reporting by non-sexual attack victims. This comparison shows that there are, indeed, unique trends in reporting for sexual assault and rape victims.

## ***II. Previous Research on Rape Reporting***

There are a variety of theories concerning the factors that affect a victim's decision to report a rape. Researchers have shown that victims are more likely to report if they think that there is a higher probability of conviction because of evidence such as injuries (Williams, 1984; Bachman, 1998; Allen, 2007), a weapon

present (Allen, 2007; Williams, 1984) or the rape being coupled with another crime such as theft (Allen, 2007). Others have shown that characteristics of the victim and the victim-offender relationship affect the juror's decision to convict (La Free 1980; Field, 1979), however, these studies have failed to address the evident problem of sample selection created by selective reporting. Studies have also argued that some victims choose not to report because of fear of retaliation from their perpetrator (Jordan, 2001).

There are many psychological factors that can affect a victim's decision to report. Some victims choose not to report because they blame themselves for being raped and fear that other people such as family, friends, and the police will blame them as well (Williams, 1984). Others victims feel embarrassed, ashamed, or numb (Burgess and Hazelwood, 2001, 29). Many researchers have theorized that the unique laws and rules of evidence pertaining to rape lead to victim's unwillingness to report (Horney and Spohn, 1991). Others have suggested that in a rape trial, both the perpetrator and the victim are on trial because the victim is questioned about her status, character, and relationship with the defender (Horney and Spohn, 1991). It has been speculated that greater knowledge of the trauma of rape reporting deters victims from reporting (Lizotte, 1985). Some researchers have also suggested that there are differing perceptions of rape across racial groups (Giacopassi, 1986) that lead to different reporting patterns among different races.

There has been some research examining rape-reporting as an economic decision. However, these studies have failed to examine how victims consider the psycho-social costs of reporting, i.e. what elements of their lifestyle they may be jeopardizing by reporting. David Allen (2007) found that victims are more likely to report if they have strong social support systems and if there is a higher probability of conviction due to evidence and credibility. Although Allen included some of the same variables used in the present study such as income and education, he relied on a very different specification that included many irrelevant confounding variables and moreover ignored his finding of a negative impact of education and other quality of life variables. Ronet Bachman (1998) also examined the cost of rape reporting by examining factors affecting a victim's decision to report, including the nature of the relationship between the perpetrator and the offender. Unfortunately, Bachman did not have enough data to reach any definitive conclusions on the subject. Allen and Bachman also failed to provide evidence that the trends found were unique to rape and sexual assault victims. This study attempts to provide a more comprehensive analysis of how victims of sexual assault and rape consider the psycho-social cost of reporting in their decision-making.

### ***III. The Decision to Report***

In any situation, the victim of a crime must consider the costs and benefits of reporting. These benefits include the emotional benefits, such as feelings of justice and retribution, as well as the probability of conviction. Although the emotional benefits of reporting are very hard to quantify, there are measurable factors affecting the probability of conviction. For example, the fact that victims are more likely to report a rape when they sustain injuries or there is a weapon present (Allen, 2007; Bachman, 1998), suggests that rape victims consider the probability of conviction in their decisions of whether or not to report.

### *The Costs of Reporting*

In the case of rape, more often than not the victim decides that the costs of reporting outweigh the potential benefits of reporting. In choosing whether or not to report a rape, the victim considers the direct costs of reporting. These costs include lawyer fees, time spent on the trial, and all other direct costs incurred by reporting a crime. Non-monetary direct costs include the pain of having to undergo a “rape kit” and the pain of having to retell their story.

When facing the decision of reporting, the victim must also consider the psycho-social costs of this decision. In other words, the victim must consider what social and emotional aspects of her life are likely to be affected by her decision to report. What makes the cost of reporting a rape so unique is the stigma attached to victims of rape, which is caused by the phenomenon of victim-blaming. Victim-blaming, in the case of rape, is the propensity to hold the victim partially or entirely responsible for the rape. Rape victims are routinely questioned about the decisions they made before the rape such as their choices of what to wear, where to go and whom to trust. Victims are also routinely questioned about their sexual history in an effort to question the validity of the rape accusation by showing previous sexual promiscuity (Campbell and Raja, 2005). The tendency to blame the victim is often described as an attempt to distance oneself from the victim, which allows us to maintain a sense of security that we are not at risk of becoming victims. This phenomenon of victim-blaming leads to a stigma which our society assigns to victims of rape. Depending on the situation, rape victims are often labeled as promiscuous, weak, or liars (Campbell and Raja, 2005). This stigma attached to rape victims often leads to rejection by peers, society, and institutions to which the victim belongs (Campbell, Wasco, Ahrens, Sefl and Barnes, 2001). Therefore, victims must consider what relationships, positions, and lifestyles they will be jeopardizing by going public with their story.

This paper argues that there are many factors that a victim considers in evaluating the psycho-social cost of reporting a rape. These factors are often related to the victim’s current quality of life and how the nature of the rape is likely to jeopardize this. Thus, I hypothesize that people with a higher quality of life, such as higher income or a more stable career, are less likely to report rapes because they have more to lose. Additionally, people who have worked harder to gain their social status, through education or experience, would be less likely to want to jeopardize it. I also expect the victim’s relationship with the perpetrator to affect the victim’s decision to report because she is jeopardizing her relationship with both the perpetrator and other mutual acquaintances. Consequently, people who were raped by partners, family, friends and or coworkers would be less likely to report. Finally, because different ethnic communities have differing perceptions of rape and sexual assault, and therefore treat victims differently, I predict that reporting patterns will vary among races. Below I test these predictions.

### ***IV. Data and Specification***

The data used in this study were taken from the 1979-2004 National Crime and Victimization Survey (NCVS). The U.S. Census Bureau administers the survey in an attempt to gain more information about the victims, consequences and prevalence of crimes beyond what is reported to the police. Respondents aged twelve and older from about 50,000 U.S. households in the 40 “core” NCVS Metropolitan Statistical Areas are interviewed each year. The NCVS operates on a “rotating panel” system in which each participant is interviewed once every six months for a period of three years. After the three years, they are replaced by another household. This study uses demographic and incident-based variables for persons who reported being the victim of a completed or attempted rape or sexual assault. Given that the sample is not limited to individuals who reported a crime, the NCVS is able to include both reported and unreported crimes. There are 1247 observations in our analysis, each representing an incident of successful or attempted rape or sexual assault. Approximately 37% of these victims reported their rape or sexual assault to the police. The dependent variable in the analysis is a dummy variable equal to “1” if the victim reported the crime to the police and “0” if the victim did not report the crime.

### Explanatory Variables

#### *Victim-Offender Relationship*

The NCVS reports 13 categories of victim-offender relationships for victims who knew their offender prior to the attack. Table 1 gives the descriptive statistics for the sample, showing that approximately 56% of the incidents were perpetrated by an acquaintance of the victim. For the purpose of this study, the categories were condensed into partner at the time of the incident (11%), ex-spouse at the time of the incident (1%), relative (3%), friend or ex-friend (10%), someone at work or a customer (4%), and other acquaintances, such as neighbors and classmates (27%). This paper hypothesizes that victims who are raped or sexually assaulted by acquaintances will be less likely to report the incident and that victims with closer relationships with their perpetrators such as relatives, partners, ex-spouses and friends will be even less likely to report. This is likely because of the effect of reporting not only on the relationship with the perpetrator but also on relationships within shared social circles. The risk that members of shared social circles will blame the victim instead of the perpetrator acts as a deterrent to reporting. Likewise, the expected effect on reporting will be greater when the offender is a coworker or customer than when the offender is simply an acquaintance or a stranger.

Additionally, it is necessary to control for incidents with multiple offenders and female offenders. Sexual assaults and rapes perpetrated by multiple offenders, accounting for 12% of incidents, are very different in nature from those perpetrated by single offenders which can affect the victim’s decision to report. Sexual assaults and rapes perpetrated by females are also often very different in nature from those perpetrated by males and can have very different psychological effects on the victims. There is a general perception that rape perpetrators are male, consistent with the mere 3% of the incidents in the data with female offenders. This leads to a heightened stigma effect for victims of female perpetrators.

### *Family Income*

Family income provides a good measure of quality of life and security. The NCVS reports six income brackets for respondents by year. The variable income was created by adjusting category mid-points to 1984 dollars using the Current Price Index data by quarter.<sup>2</sup> The respondents in the dataset had an average family income of 20,191 1984-dollars and standard deviation of 15,750 dollars, as seen in Table 1. This paper predicts that victims with higher family incomes will be less likely to report a rape because they have more to lose from the process. This is because victims with higher family incomes will likely be less willing to jeopardize their reputation and position in the community by reporting a rape or sexual assault. Additionally, the process of reporting any crime is very time consuming. Victims with higher family income, who therefore have a higher opportunity cost of the time spent reporting, may be less likely to deem the process worthwhile.

### *Education*

The NCVS also provides information on the education level of the victim. The number of grades completed is given for respondents whose highest level of education did not exceed 12th grade. For respondents who participated in some form of post-high school education the nature of that education is listed. The variable education estimates the number of years completed by the respondent by filling in the estimated number of years needed to complete the listed post high school degree (for example, a college degree was estimated to take four years to complete). The average respondent received 10.6 years of education with a standard deviation of 2.1. This paper hypothesizes that victims who have completed more years of education will be less likely to report a rape or sexual assault. This is because people with a higher number of years of education have likely worked harder to achieve what they have achieved and are less likely to be willing to jeopardize their reputation and their job. Higher education also suggests higher positions within companies. Furthermore, people with higher levels of education are often accorded more respect within a community, and they are likely to be less willing to sacrifice that respect. They may also have more opportunity for career growth which they do not want to jeopardize. It is possible that victims with higher education are more likely to report crimes because they have a greater understanding of the system and greater credibility in the eyes of the jury. However, in the case of rape, a greater understanding of the system may also mean that the victim is familiar with the stigma assigned to rape victims and the way in which members of communities and institutions are treated when they report a rape.

### *Race*

Communities and cultures have varying perspectives on rape, gender roles and criminal justice and therefore the stigma effect varies among communities and races. These differing understandings of rape and

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<sup>2</sup> Due to the fact that the highest income category did not include an upper bound, income was designated by the median household income for respondents with income over \$50,000 for males and females, separately, during the year of the observation calculated from the March Current Population Survey.

sexual assault lead to varying ways of treating victims and therefore likely affect their decisions to report. The racial categories given by the NCVS were used to test the hypothesis that there is a difference in reporting among races. The categories used in this study were non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, Indian or Asian, and Hispanic. Table 1 shows that 65% of respondents were white, 20% black, 3% Indian or Asian, and 8% Hispanic.

### *Gender of the Victim*

Given that our society reacts very differently to male and female victims of rape and sexual assault, it is hypothesized that there will be different reporting patterns for male and female victims. Others have found that the stigma assigned to male rape victims is often more severe than that assigned to female victims (Pino and Meier, 1999). This study attempts to confirm that men, who make up 10% of respondents in the data, are less likely to report than women.<sup>3</sup>

### *Marital Status*

Victims were classified as never married, married at the time of the incident, and once married but no longer married at the time of the incident. As Table 1 shows, 14% of the respondents were married, 62% were never married, and 24% were once married. The no-longer-married category includes victims who reported being divorced, separated, or widowed. Victims of different marital statuses face very different costs of reporting. Some victims may fear losing their spouse or damaging their relationship with their spouse if they admit to having been raped or sexually assaulted. On the other hand, some victims may feel that the support of their spouses gives them the strength to report. Non-married victims may worry that if they report the rape, they will be viewed as damaged goods and will have trouble finding future partners.

### *Age*

The costs of reporting are also likely to vary by age, given the fact that people of different ages are often in very different positions in life and society. Age can affect social circles, social mobility, environment, and learned opinions on rape and sexual assault. The NCVS separates respondents into eight age categories, which for the purposes of this study were condensed into five categories. The age categories in this study were chosen to best capture life stages.

### *Time Controls*

In considering factors that affect reporting decisions, it is necessary to include a time trend. Over the last thirty years both social perceptions of rape and sexual assault and institutional treatment of rape and sexual assault victims have greatly evolved. Institutions such as police forces and the judicial system have

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<sup>3</sup> In my empirical analysis, I also tested whether males' rape reporting depended on the gender of the offender and found it did not. Similarly, I found that women did not report rape by female offenders and male offenders at different rates.



created policies and programs to ease the process of reporting a rape. There has also been a movement to educate the public on rape myths which may result in people who would previously not have considered themselves rape victims to consider themselves rape victims. Additionally, a variable detailing whether or not the incident happened after 1992 was included to account for a revision of the NCVS survey.<sup>4</sup>

This study uses logit analysis of the data to examine patterns of reporting of rape and sexual assault. Given that the dependent variable in this study, the decision to report, is a dummy variable, the result of the regression will allow me to compute the probability that a victim will choose to report given a specific set of circumstances. Later, the results of the logit analysis are compared to an identical logit analysis done on the set of victims of non-sexual attacks to verify that the original results are unique to rape and sexual assault victims.

#### ***IV. Results***

Table 2 displays the results of the logit analysis. Of the 1247 cases analyzed in this study, only 39.17% of them were reported to the police. The column “Odds Ratio - 1” represents the percent change in the probability of reporting given a change of 1 in the explanatory variable. For example, an “Odds Ratio - 1” of .1 implies that as the explanatory variable increases by 1, the probability of reporting increases by 10% (such as from .5 to .55). These values are used to help interpret the results of the logit analysis.

The results in Table 2 are consistent with the hypothesis that victims consider the psycho-social cost of reporting a rape or sexual assault to the police. The results of the logit analysis show that the higher the household income of the victim is, the less likely she is to report the rape ( $p = .020$ ). Table 2 shows that as the household income of the victim increases by a thousand dollars, the probability that the victim reports decreases by 1.1%. The results of the logit analysis also confirm ( $p = .004$ ), victims with more years of education are less likely to report a rape or sexual assault. As Table 2 shows, as the number of years of education the victim has increases by one, the probability that the victim reports the crime decreases by 11.5%.

The results of the logit analysis confirm that the nature of the relationship between the victim and the offender affects the decision of the victim to report. As predicted, victims who are assaulted by a partner or friend are less likely to report the incident than those assaulted by strangers ( $p < .0001$ ). Specifically, when the perpetrator is a boyfriend, girlfriend or spouse the victim is 63.8% less likely to report the incident and when the perpetrator is a friend is 68.4% less likely to report it. Victims who are raped by a coworker or customer are 56.4% less likely to report ( $p = .026$ ). Although the coefficients associated with both relative and ex-

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<sup>4</sup> In 1992 the NCVS underwent a revision process and by 1994 all of the surveys given were the redesigned version. Beginning in 1992 only the data from the redesigned survey is included in the dataset used in this study. The redesigned survey asked more specific questions about rape and sexual assault in an effort to get more victims of sexual assault and rape to disclose the incidents. This likely affected the reporting rate seeing as victims who had reported their assaults to the police were probably more likely to have also reported it to the NCVS prior to the redesigned survey being instated. This study uses the variable post92 to capture the effect of the redesigned survey.

spouse are negative and large, neither coefficient is significant at the .1 level. This is likely due lack of sufficient observations. However, this is not the case with the “all other acquaintances” variable. Although there are 336 observations in which the perpetrator fell into the category of “all other acquaintance,” the coefficient was highly insignificant and less than a quarter of the magnitude of the significant coefficients on relationship variables.

As predicted, the results in Table 2 show that there are racial differences in reporting patterns. Compared with non-Hispanic whites, Indians, Asians and Hispanics are all less likely to report a rape or sexual assault. Indians and Asians were 60% less likely than whites to report ( $p=.039$ ). Hispanics were 34.9% less likely to report than whites ( $p=.077$ ). The analysis does not show a significant difference in reporting between whites and blacks although the coefficients indicate that blacks are 20.3% more likely to report relative to whites.

The results also confirm results from previous studies that male victims are less likely to report than female victims (Allen, 2007). Table 2 suggests that male victims are 31.9% less likely to report than female victims. The logit analysis also shows that married victims report 127% more than do victims who were never married ( $p<.0001$ ). There does not appear to be a significant difference in reporting between victims who were once married and victims who were never married.

The results of the logit analysis provide strong evidence that victims of sexual assault and rape do consider their psycho-social costs of reporting a rape or sexual assault. Table 2 suggests that victims are less likely to report a rape when they have a greater opportunity to suffer at work, and therefore financially. When a victim reports a rape, she is likely to lose the respect of her coworkers, boss, and customers. The highly negative coefficient on income suggests that the more the victims have to lose, the less likely they are to sacrifice their quality of life by reporting. Likewise, the negative coefficient on education shows that victims with higher status and more opportunity for career growth are less likely to report and jeopardize this. The negative effect on reporting associated with rape or sexual assault by a coworker or customer illustrates the fear of losing a customer base, a comfortable working environment or even a job. If the perpetrator of a rape or sexual assault is a coworker, the victim is likely to be more heavily scrutinized at work by people who had positive relationships with the perpetrator including other coworkers and authority figures. Clearly, if the perpetrator is a boss or other authority figure in the company, the victim is likely to lose her position if she reports the crime.

The results of the logit analysis also confirm that victims are less likely to report when they feel as though they are jeopardizing their social standing. The lower rates of reporting associated with perpetrators who are partners and relatives show that victims are less likely to report when they are risking losing a position in their social circles. Although victims are not likely to wish to continue a relationship with their perpetrator, many victims may fear losing their mutual social circles when they report the rape or sexual assault. Knowledge that they are likely to be subject to victim blaming by mutual friends who are not willing to villanize the perpetrator causes the victims to refrain from reporting in order to maintain relationships.

This hypothesis is also confirmed by the negative coefficient on education. Victims with higher education are likely to have a more respected position in their community, and therefore the lower reporting rate suggests a reluctance to jeopardize their status. Furthermore, the variation in reporting rates among victims of different races suggests that victims consider the potential response of their community and family to the decision to report. The results indicate that the rape has the most stigma in Asian/Indian cultures and the least in white and black non-Hispanic cultures.

Never-married victims are the least likely to report a rape, perhaps because they are the ones most likely to be considered “used goods” as a result of being raped. Men may lose an aura of machismo if they report that they have been raped. In both of these cases, psycho-social costs lower rape reporting.

### *The Uniqueness of Rape: Comparing Rape Reporting with the Reporting of Other Attacks*

Although the logit analysis in Table 2 are consistent with the argument that rape and sexual assault victims consider the unique psycho-social cost caused by the stigma effect, the question as to whether these patterns are unique to rape and sexual assault victims remains. Perhaps the regression in Table 2 has just captured generic trends in reporting and not trends specific to rape. In order to test the hypothesis that rape and sexual assault victims have unique trends in reporting decisions, a comparison was done between the reporting of other nonsexual attacks and the reporting of rape and sexual assault. The same logit analysis that was performed on the set of rape and sexual assault victims was performed on a dataset containing the 17,528 victims of a nonsexual attack in the NCVS. The results are shown in Table 3 and a side by side comparison of the two logit analyses is shown in Table 4.

While a mere 37% of rapes and sexual assaults were reported to the police, 54% of attacks were reported. Table 3 shows a positive coefficient on education that has a significance level that is less than .0001. Unlike rape victims who become less likely to report with more years of education, victims of attacks are actually more likely to report if they have had more education. Although both attack victims and rape and sexual assault victims are less likely to report if the perpetrator of the crime is a partner or a friend, the effect of this relationship on the probability of a victim reporting is significantly higher for rape and sexual assault victims. This can be seen by performing a significance test on the difference in the coefficients which results in a p-value of .014 for friends and a p-value less than .0001 for partners. Although there are over twelve times the observations in the dataset of attacks, the coefficients associated with Indian/Asian and Hispanic were no longer significant. There was no significant difference between the coefficients in the sexual assault and rape logit analysis and the coefficients in the nonsexual attacks logit analysis for either income variable or any of the other variables describing the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim.

The comparison between sexual and nonsexual attacks confirms that rape and sexual assault victims do indeed have unique reporting trends. It has been hypothesized that victims are more likely to report a crime if they have had more education because they have a better understanding of the legal system and appear to be more credible witnesses (Allen, 2007). However, in the case of rape, victim-blaming is so

prevalent that very few victims are given much credibility and a better understanding of the legal system actually deters victims from reporting. Although all victims are less likely to report a crime when the perpetrator is someone close to them, the heightened effect on reporting rates for partners and friends for rape victims illustrates that victims of rape and sexual assault believe that they have more to lose by reporting a partner or friend than victims of other attacks. Racial differences in patterns of rape reporting show that the difference in rape reporting trends between races is actually due to differing attitudes towards reporting a rape rather than differing attitudes towards reporting overall. Although there was no significant difference found between patterns of reporting for coworker/customer relationships, it is possible that with more observations a difference would be found. For male victims, although there was also no significant difference found, the difference in the coefficients for males is large and in the expected direction.

While I had expected rape reporting to deter high income victims more than reported other kinds of attacks, I actually found only a small and statistically insignificant difference in the coefficients on income, although the direction of the difference is as predicted. This suggests that the negative coefficients on income in both analyses are capturing the effect of victims with higher income having higher opportunity costs of the time it takes to report. Although victims with higher family incomes likely fear greater monetary loss if they report, perhaps all victims fear losing a similar percent decline in income upon reporting. This would explain why there appears to be no unique deterrence effect of higher income on sexual assault and rape reporting.

## ***VI. Conclusion***

For many years, rape has existed as a hidden epidemic. The degree to which rape and sexual assault exist within our society is masked by substantial under-reporting. In order to address this under-reporting, it is essential to understand the unique costs of reporting that the rape victim faces. As the analyses in this study confirm, rape and sexual assault victims consider the stigma that they are likely to suffer upon reporting. When these victims choose not to report, perpetrators go unscathed. Furthermore, the public remains uneducated on the prevalence and nature of the crime. Rather than merely encouraging victims of rape and sexual assault to report their victimization, policies and programs need to be instituted to debunk common misperceptions on the subject. Educational programs portraying rape as a crime of control and aggression by the perpetrator, rather than a response instigated by the victim, would help reduce the tendency to blame the victim. Furthermore, educating the public on the phenomenon of victim-blaming may stimulate individuals' recognition of their own victim blaming tendencies. The results of this paper could also be used to identify targeted audiences for these educational programs for which the most severe under-reporting exists.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics<sup>5</sup>**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Incidents</b>	<b>Percent of Total Incidents</b>	<b>Incidents Reported</b>	<b>Percent of Incidents Reported</b>
<b>Age</b>				
12-17	260	20.85%	116	44.62%
18-24	380	30.47%	142	37.37%
25-34	324	25.98%	133	41.05%
35-49	223	17.88%	82	36.77%
50 +	60	4.81%	22	36.67%
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Married	180	14.43%	92	51.11%
Once Married	295	23.66%	106	35.93%
Never married	770	61.75%	296	38.44%
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	128	10.26%	43	33.59%
Female	1119	89.74%	452	40.39%
<b>Race</b>				
White	814	65.28%	314	38.57%
Black	248	19.89%	118	47.58%
Indian/Asian	35	2.81%	8	22.86%
Hispanic	101	8.10%	36	35.64%
<b>Single Offender Sex</b>				
Male	1030	82.60%	396	38.45%
Female	32	2.57%	6	18.75%
<b>Single Offender Relationship</b>				
Partner at time of incident	141	11.31%	32	22.70%
Ex-spouse at time of incident	12	0.94%	3	25.00%
Relative	32	2.57%	16	50.00%
Friend or ex-friend	126	9.89%	26	20.63%
Someone at work, customer	49	3.85%	11	22.45%
Other Acquaintance	336	26.94%	139	41.37%
<b>Multiple Offenders</b>				
Yes	155	12.43%	83	53.55%
No	1092	87.57%	412	37.73%
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
<b>Household Income</b>	20250	15782	1985	72735
<b>Education</b>	10.64	2.13	0	20

<sup>5</sup> Based on 1247 observations from the National Crime and Victimization Survey, 1979-2004

**Table 2: Logit Analysis on Rape and Sexual Assault Reporting<sup>6</sup>**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>Standard Error</b>	<b>Odds Ratio - 1</b>	<b>P value</b>
Income (in thousands)**	-0.011	0.005	-0.011	0.020
Missing Income**	-0.406	0.204	-0.334	0.046
Education***	-0.123	0.042	-0.115	0.004
Missing Education***	-1.415	0.508	-0.757	0.005
<i>Offender Relationships</i>				
Partner***	-1.017	0.236	-0.638	0.000
Friend***	-1.151	0.253	-0.684	0.000
Relative	-0.683	0.526	-0.495	0.194
Ex-spouse	-0.683	0.694	-0.495	0.325
Coworker or customer**	-0.830	0.373	-0.564	0.026
All other acquaintances	-0.187	0.159	-0.171	0.238
<i>Race</i>				
Black	0.185	0.162	0.203	0.255
Indian or Asian**	-0.917	0.444	-0.600	0.039
Hispanic*	-0.430	0.243	-0.349	0.077
<i>Age</i>				
18-24	-0.116	0.223	-0.110	0.602
25-34	-0.123	0.250	-0.116	0.621
35-49	-0.143	0.289	-0.134	0.620
50 and older	-0.398	0.386	-0.328	0.302
<i>Marital Status</i>				
Married***	0.819	0.209	1.269	0.000
Once married	0.168	0.193	0.183	0.384
Male Victim*	-0.385	0.220	-0.319	0.080
Female Offender	-0.534	0.489	-0.413	0.276
Multiple Offenders	0.183	0.201	0.201	0.361
Year	0.027	0.017	0.027	0.120
Post 1992***	-0.983	0.259	-0.626	0.000

\* significant at .1 level

\*\* significant at .05 level

\*\*\* significant at .01 level

<sup>6</sup>Based on 1247 observations from the National Crime and Victimization Survey, 1979-2004

**Table 3: Logit Analysis on Nonsexual Attack Reporting <sup>7</sup>**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>Standard Error</b>	<b>Odds Ratio - 1</b>	<b>P value</b>
Income (in thousands)***	-0.008	0.001	-0.008	0.000
Missing Income***	-0.177	0.053	-0.162	0.001
Education***	0.057	0.010	0.059	0.000
Missing Education***	0.606	0.118	0.832	0.000
<i>Offender Relationships</i>				
Partner***	-0.235	0.060	-0.210	0.000
Friend***	-0.568	0.079	-0.433	0.000
Relative	-0.032	0.152	-0.031	0.834
Ex-spouse**	0.306	0.154	0.358	0.047
Coworker or customer***	-1.074	0.128	-0.658	0.000
All other acquaintances***	-0.154	0.046	-0.142	0.001
<i>Race</i>				
Black***	0.264	0.045	0.302	0.000
Indian or Asian	-0.082	0.100	-0.079	0.410
Hispanic	-0.035	0.051	-0.034	0.493
<i>Age</i>				
18-24***	0.560	0.055	0.751	0.000
25-34***	0.838	0.061	1.311	0.000
35-49***	0.742	0.069	1.099	0.000
50 and older***	0.880	0.079	1.410	0.000
<i>Marital Status</i>				
Married***	0.455	0.049	0.575	0.000
Once married***	0.197	0.053	0.217	0.000
Male Victim***	-0.158	0.036	-0.146	0.000
Female Offender**	-0.110	0.055	-0.104	0.045
Multiple Offenders***	0.249	0.043	0.283	0.000
Year**	0.010	0.004	0.010	0.022
Post 1992**	-0.128	0.063	-0.120	0.041

\* significant at .1 level

\*\* significant at .05 level

\*\*\* significant at .01 level

<sup>7</sup> Based on 17,528 observations from the National Crime and Victimization Survey, 1979-2004

**Table 4: Comparison of Coefficients of Rapes and Sexual Assault Victims with Non-Sexual Attacks Victims**

Variable	Rape Coefficient <i>Standard Error</i>	Attack Coefficient <i>Standard Error</i>	Difference <i>Standard Error</i>	P value
<b>Income (in thousands)</b>	-0.011 <i>0.005</i>	-0.008 <i>0.001</i>	0.003 <i>0.005</i>	0.261
<b>Missing Income</b>	-0.406 <i>0.204</i>	-0.177 <i>0.053</i>	0.229 <i>0.210</i>	0.138
<b>Education***</b>	-0.123 <i>0.042</i>	0.057 <i>0.010</i>	0.180 <i>0.044</i>	0.000
<b>Missing Education***</b>	-1.415 <i>0.508</i>	0.606 <i>0.118</i>	2.021 <i>0.522</i>	0.000
<i>Offender Relationships</i>				
<b>Partner***</b>	-1.017 <i>0.236</i>	-0.235 <i>0.060</i>	0.782 <i>0.244</i>	0.001
<b>Friend**</b>	-1.151 <i>0.253</i>	-0.568 <i>0.079</i>	0.582 <i>0.265</i>	0.014
<b>Relative</b>	-0.683 <i>0.526</i>	-0.032 <i>0.152</i>	0.651 <i>0.547</i>	0.117
<b>Ex-spouse*</b>	-0.683 <i>0.694</i>	0.306 <i>0.154</i>	0.989 <i>0.711</i>	0.082
<b>Coworker or customer</b>	-0.830 <i>0.373</i>	-1.074 <i>0.128</i>	-0.243 <i>0.394</i>	0.732
<b>All other acquaintances</b>	-0.187 <i>0.159</i>	-0.154 <i>0.046</i>	0.034 <i>0.165</i>	0.419
<i>Race</i>				
<b>Black</b>	0.185 <i>0.162</i>	0.264 <i>0.045</i>	0.080 <i>0.168</i>	0.318
<b>Indian or Asian**</b>	-0.917 <i>0.444</i>	-0.082 <i>0.100</i>	0.835 <i>0.455</i>	0.033
<b>Hispanic*</b>	-0.430 <i>0.243</i>	-0.035 <i>0.051</i>	0.395 <i>0.249</i>	0.056
<i>Age</i>				
<b>18-24***</b>	-0.116 <i>0.223</i>	0.560 <i>0.055</i>	0.677 <i>0.230</i>	0.002
<b>25-34***</b>	-0.123 <i>0.250</i>	0.838 <i>0.061</i>	0.961 <i>0.257</i>	0.000
<b>35-49***</b>	-0.143 <i>0.289</i>	0.742 <i>0.069</i>	0.885 <i>0.297</i>	0.001
<b>50 and older***</b>	-0.398 <i>0.386</i>	0.880 <i>0.079</i>	1.278 <i>0.394</i>	0.001
<i>Marital Status</i>				
<b>Married</b>	0.819 <i>0.209</i>	0.455 <i>0.049</i>	-0.365 <i>0.215</i>	0.955
<b>Once married</b>	0.168 <i>0.193</i>	0.197 <i>0.053</i>	0.029 <i>0.200</i>	0.443
<b>Male Victim</b>	-0.385 <i>0.220</i>	-0.158 <i>0.036</i>	0.227 <i>0.223</i>	0.154
<b>Female Offender</b>	-0.534 <i>0.489</i>	-0.110 <i>0.055</i>	0.424 <i>0.492</i>	0.195
<b>Multiple Offenders</b>	0.183 <i>0.201</i>	0.249 <i>0.043</i>	0.066 <i>0.205</i>	0.374
<b>Year</b>	0.027 <i>0.017</i>	0.010 <i>0.004</i>	-0.017 <i>0.018</i>	0.828
<b>Post 1992***</b>	-0.983 <i>0.259</i>	-0.128 <i>0.063</i>	0.855 <i>0.267</i>	0.001

\* significant at .1 level

\*\* significant at .05 level

\*\*\* significant at .01 level



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