Panel on Campus and Youth Respond to Gender Violence (Transcript)

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Panel on Campus and Youth Respond to Gender Violence

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WILLIAMS: This presentation focuses on a study conducted in Baltimore, Maryland with seventh grade students as part of a dating violence prevention project. Specifically, this presentation examines dating violence in general, its relationship to another form of violence called relational aggression, and the health outcomes of these, focusing on the role of gender. There is a lot of different terminology that is used for adolescent dating violence such as dating violence, relationship violence, relationship abuse and so on. For purposes of this project it was defined as actions carried out in a dating relationship with the intent to threaten or inflict physical and/or emotional harm. So we are really looking at the physical and emotional aspects of violence which do not

* This transcript has been edited from its original transcription for clarity.
† Original remarks from the CONVERGE! conference omitted.

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have to be actual, they can also be intentional. Adolescence dating violence data show that it is pretty common. Perpetration rates range from twenty-six to forty-six and victimization from nine to twenty-three.¹ Research also shows a significant association between dating violence and adverse health outcomes. Youth, regardless of whether they are perpetrators or victims, can experience things like depression, eating disorders, suicidal ideation, sexually transmitted diseases, and unplanned pregnancy as well as, engagement in future violent behaviors.² When we look at gender differences, we see, somewhat surprisingly, that research consistently reports higher levels of dating violence among females compared to males.³ There are many theories for why we see higher rates of perpetration among females and some of these are the differences in the types of violence that are being perpetrated, physical, emotional, sexual violence, the intent of the violence, such as self-defense, as well as the outcomes of the violence.⁴ Research on risk factors for adolescent dating violence indicates that exposure to violence at the individual, community, and family levels are important.⁵ Important to note, many of

⁴ See Vangie A. Foshee, Gender Differences in Adolescent Dating Abuse Prevalence, Types and Injuries; 11 HEALTH EDUC. RES. 275 (1996); Maura O’Keefe, Predictors of Dating Violence Among High School Students, 12 J. INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE 546 (1997); Hickman et al., supra note 1.
⁵ See Kenneth A. Chase et al., Characteristics of High-Risk Adolescent Dating Violence, 17 J. INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE 33 (2002); Kristen M. Kinsfogel & John H. Grych, Interparental Conflict and Adolescent Dating Relationships: Integrating Cognitive, Emotional, and Peer Influences, 18 J. FAMILY PSYCHOL. 505 (2004); Maura O’Keefe, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Among Incarcerated Battered Women: A
the models used predict risk factors for dating violence have been more salient for males, so less is known about what predicts risk for experiencing dating violence among females. To help determine potential risks for dating violence among females, this study looked at the association between dating violence and relational aggression. Relational aggression refers to a set of manipulative behaviors that are used to inflict harm in another through damage to relationships. It is often conceptualized as the kind of aggression characteristic of girls, such as threatening to turn friends against friends and using social standing as tool for manipulation. The prevalence is about 8.7 to 16% for perpetration and about 8% for victimization. Even though relational aggression is associated more as behavior among girls, there are mixed results in the literature about gender differences. Some studies find that girls perpetrate more and that girls are more often victims, whereas others find that boys are equally victimized or use this type of aggression just as often. An important difference is that when females do engage in relational aggression, they are more likely to experience adverse health.

Comparison of Battered Women Who Killed Their Abusers and Those Incarcerated for Other Offenses, 11 J. TRAUMATIC STRESS 71 (1998).


See Nicki R. Crick et al., Engagement In Gender Normative Versus Gender Non-Normative Forms of Aggression: Links to Social-Psychological Adjustment, 67 DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOL. 2317 (1997); Nicki R. Crick et al., A Longitudinal Study of Relational Aggression, Physical Aggression, and Children’s Social-Psychological Adjustment, 34 J. ABNORMAL CHILD PSYCHOL. 131 (2006).


outcomes. For this study, we surveyed 194 students in four middle schools in Baltimore, Maryland with about 60% female. Ages ranged from twelve to fifteen with a mean age of thirteen and most were African American. Students in the study had a lot of past experience with violence; 99.4% had experienced some kind of violence in the community; 72% reported family violence; and 50% reported some kind of personal violence. 87% of the entire sample reported having a boyfriend or girlfriend. When we look at dating violence perpetration, we also see high rates with approximately 40% reporting this. When we look at differences by gender, we see, consistent with the literature, that females reported perpetrating more physical violence than males. When we look at victimization, again, we see pretty high rates with about 30% reporting this. But, when we look at gender differences, we see males are reporting more victimization, particularly, emotional types of dating violence victimization. For relational aggression, the perpetration rate was 16.8% and victimization was 18.4%. Males reported more victimization which is contrary to what we think about with relational aggression being more characteristic of girls. When we looked at the relationship between dating violence and relational aggression we found, for girls, perpetrating emotional dating violence was associated with experiencing relational aggression and victimization. For boys, we did not see any kind of relationship between these two forms of violence. Dating violence and relational aggression were both related to different health outcomes. For girls, experiences of violence, both dating violence and relational aggression were associated with poor health outcomes. These included things like externalizing behavior (acting out types of behavior, disciplinary issues, substance abuse), internalizing behavior (low self-esteem, depressive symptoms) as well as attention problems (difficulty with attention in the classroom and personal life). Boys, on the other hand, did not experience any kind of adverse health outcomes from experiencing dating violence. They did, however, experience these adverse outcomes with regard to relational aggression. There are several theories and hypotheses for why people experience adverse health outcomes when exposed to violence and one possible factor is related to how normal the behavior or experience is. The thought is that the more abnormal the experience, the more likely one is to experience adverse

health outcomes from it. This helps to explain the findings for boys because dating violence could be considered a normal behavior among boys and as such would be less likely to experience adverse health outcomes as a result. Relational aggression, on the other hand, is conceptualized as a characteristic behavior among girls so when boys experience it, they may be more likely to experience adverse health outcomes from it because it is a less normal type of aggression. There are a couple of implications for this when we talk about how school systems and health care centers respond to violence among youth, particularly this type of relationship violence. There are some indications for focusing prevention efforts earlier. Most dating violence prevention programs target high school students, however, this study was conducted among seventh graders demonstrating that this is an important issue even for this younger age group. It is also important that we tailor prevention programs so that they are gender sensitive; that we talk about violence occurring among males and among females and tailor our strategies to best address these differences. At the same time, we need to be cautious about how violence is characterized based on gender and stereotypes because a lot of our prevention programs for relational aggression are targeted toward girls, even though we see that boys are also experiencing and engaging in this type of behavior and it is associated with adverse consequences. Finally, we need to target multiple types of violence not just physical violence, which is traditionally what is focused on, and also recognize the co-occurrence of perpetration and victimization. This study found high rates of this kind of bi-directional violence and it is important that we understand the nuances and address both sides of that equation.

FRANKS: I am also speaking of unhealthy relationships. What I will be talking about is a phenomenon that has been popularly referred to as revenge porn. I just want to get a show of hands as to how many people have heard this term and have some sense of what it means. If you asked this question six months ago you would not have gotten the same response—that is I guess both encouraging and discouraging. Revenge porn is a popular term for non-consensual disclosure of sexually intimate images. It is a misleading term because it is not always done for revenge and it is not strictly speaking always porn, but we will talk about that in a minute.

I think it is more helpful to think of the category of conduct here as non-consensual pornography. That is to say, it is not necessarily the case that someone would do this as a way of hurting the other partner. There is this interesting intersection between what we might think of as intimate partner violence and profit. There are websites dedicated to these types of images. There are people who are making quite a lot of money off of these images, so it is an industry in addition to being what
we might think of as personal violence. In addition to those cold-eyed monetized motivations and really vicious ex-partners who are determined to ruin the lives of the people that they are no longer with, there is also a category of opportunistic or possibly even ignorant perpetrators. This relates a little bit to some of the previous presentation—so much of what’s happening in this form of conduct is that it is being perpetrated by younger and younger people, some of whom may not understand the consequences of putting an image out there. And when I say putting an image out there, I mean the person who has chosen to take that image and disclose it beyond the context of the relationship. But there may be some unawareness on the part of the perpetrator that this could have, and almost always does have, devastating and in some cases irremediable effects. So it is a thorny problem because on the one hand it is familiar in many respects because of the dynamics of control, the dynamics of sexual shaming, the dynamics of thoughtless compulsive behavior intersecting with a profitable industry. To be clear, the forms that this kind of behavior can take are not limited to the Internet. There was a case in 2007 involving a man who was upset because his girlfriend decided to end the relationship. He took DVDs he had made of them having sex, that she did not know about, and he made hundreds of copies and put them on the car windshields of every car in her neighborhood. So it is not just an Internet phenomenon but we can all probably understand and appreciate how easy it is for someone to disseminate this kind of image on the Internet. There are particular protections that Internet activity gets; some of you may be familiar with Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. It says that there is more protection for people who provide web platforms for other people’s conduct and content than you would normally have as if you were doing something directly yourself. So imagine that that’s why FACEBOOK isn’t responsible for every awful thing that gets put on FACEBOOK; YOUTUBE is not responsible for every awful thing uploaded to YOUTUBE. What that means, is you could in theory, this has happened, have a revenge porn website and your defense could be, “Hey, I’m just providing a space for people to get back at their girlfriends. I’ve got nothing to do with this, I’m just giving them some place where they can roam free with their aggression.” That has worked up to a certain point. There are different difficulties in trying to address this from a legal perspective. One is that you can create a flourishing trade in this type of conduct and be immunized to some extent but also you are creating more demand. So this is becoming, the newest, most interesting, and edgy form of pornography. That means there is going to be a lot more demand for this type of content. Many of these websites actively solicit this type of
content—they say come send us all the pictures of your exes because that is what we do here.

In the cases you may have heard about, the more high profile cases of Hunter Moore and Kevin Bollaert—who are two of the people who have actually been brought up on charges for running these types of sites—it turns out that what they’re alleged to have done is paid other people to hack into the emails and other types of accounts of the women whose pictures they wanted. These are not situations where you have someone who trusted a partner and gave it to them and they then took revenge; it is actually where someone’s computer or email account was broken into and these images were retrieved. That is part of the reason why these are two revenge porn site operators are getting charged with something because it is illegal to hack into somebody’s email, even if it may not be illegal to run a revenge porn site; so it is a little bit like getting Al Capone on tax evasion, but we will take it for now.

So what does this all mean? It means that we are dealing with something slightly new, slightly old, and the problems that are created by are many. There is a technical problem because many times when victims call the police—it is interesting that they call the police when they discover that these images of them are on a revenge porn site or have been sent to their boss or their family and say “this is a horrible thing that has happened and I know it is my ex who did it,” the police will tell them “there is nothing we can do for you.” And that can be of saying, “close your computer and it won’t hurt you anymore”, which I think many of you in this room understand why that is not an appropriate response. It can be an outright form of victim blaming: “You should not have given him the picture,” something that affects women and girls more and more seriously than it does boys and men. Even though men and women, boys and girls, tend to exchange sexually explicit images at about the same rate. In fact, men actually exchange them slightly more often (as anybody who has ever received unsolicited pictures may be able to tell you), but for some reason that does not mean that they are victimized as often as are women. Women and girls are more likely to have this happen to them even though they do not send more pictures of themselves than do boys and men. Men and boys are primarily the perpetrators. If it is not clear to anyone in the room, the consequences of this behavior can be very very serious. What has happened to most victims is that they immediately receive propositions from people that they do not know. Some of them are physically stalked. Many of them are threatened with rape and sexual assault. Something along the lines of, “I saw your picture, you whore, and there are certain things that I will do to you, because I know you’re such a whore.” In addition, these images are often sent to parents, brothers, fellow students, teachers, to everybody
that the person works with. There have been victims who have lost their jobs because of this. There are people who are forced to move from the town they love because they are recognized everywhere they go. They go to Starbucks and someone says, “Hey, I saw your picture,” and that means they can’t actually escape this. We have heard a little bit of this before, this is not so different from what victims describe in terms of stalking and harassment that are not revenge porn related, but it is hard to ever escape it, it doesn’t end, it doesn’t have a vanishing point. It can infiltrate every aspect of a person’s life. They cannot get away from it. And I do not want to belabor the point, but I do want us to think about what it is like from the perspective of the victim who has to look around her and know that her mother has seen these pictures, her father has seen these pictures, every friend that she knows has seen these pictures. If she is a lawyer and stands up in the courtroom, she thinks that they have all seen her pictures too. Just to imagine to the depths to which you would be surrounded by the fact that you have been exposed in your most intimate moment, possibly at a moment of trust, the whole world can see and punish you for.

So, why is it happening I think is one of the questions we always have to ask ourselves as we are trying to craft responses to this type of behavior. There is really no way to craft a response without asking the question why do people do it. Why are we tolerating it and why are there no specific laws, or very few specific laws that are aimed at this type of behavior? Because a part of what the police officers say to some of these victims that it is not a crime is actually true. It is not illegal to do this unless you live in New Jersey or in California or Alaska. So move to those states. What we are seeing is a continuation in many respects of things that we have always seen . . . the trivialization of violence against women, the trivialization of the harassment of women, the inability of law enforcement, and society, generally to take this seriously and to respond. The response is “it is just a picture” or “you deserved it.”

I came to this issue because I had been studying cyber harassment for some years and I published an article about the effects of cyber harassment especially on women titled Unwilling Avatars. A victim who had experienced revenge porn in Florida came across the article and realized we were in the same city and decided to make an appointment with me to tell me her story. At the end of her story she said I want your help in changing the laws in this country. I said, “I’m an academic; I don’t do that, you’ve come to the wrong place,” but she convinced me because her story was so compelling. I find appalling the idea that we

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12 Mary Anne Franks, Unwilling Avatars: Idealism and Discrimination in Cyberspace, Colum. J. Gender & L. 224 (2011).
can have an entire industry that is built on the shaming of women, on the idea that women can be humiliated for engaging in sexual activity and the response to it is “its your own fault” or “it’s not that big a deal”. The law has not caught up but when you try to argue for legal reform the most common response is “we already have laws that take care of this kind of thing”. But the idea that you can get a police officer to take a stalking claim or harassment claim seriously or for that matter a sexual assault claim or domestic violence claim seriously— is a fantasy. Now we are going to add to this the fact that the damage can be so instantaneous and in many cases irremediable. It is really just the kind of combination of factors that cries out for some sort of solution.

What I’ve tried as one of the solutions is to craft laws that could be targeted at this type of conduct so that we can deter people. There are all sorts of interesting conversations to be had especially in the context of this conference about whether it is good to have more criminal laws. I certainly heard the objections that we shouldn’t have any more laws, we have too many already. I do not think that I can’t put much store by that particular objection. I can understand that some people might believe that the criminal response is not the ideal one but if we are serious about saying this is something that needs to not happen—It is not enough to say we are going to do the right thing afterwards because you cannot actually make somebody whole after this.

The question really has to be, how do you build a society in which this does not happen; where you raise boys and men who are willing to say that kind of behavior is unacceptable? How do you build a society where nobody will be willing to say, “Hey you know you really shouldn’t have taken that picture” as opposed to “I can’t believe someone violated your consent”. As long as we are having this conversation about how these girls should not have done this we are repeating all of the bad old stories we’ve been trying really hard to get out from underneath. We have to stop the idea that it is about women having to change their behavior, the idea that you should be allowed to punish women for their trust, the idea that you should punish women for being sexual with anybody and or to just tell them, “hey you need to expect the consequences of engaging in sex,” as if that even made any sense. So, it is a challenge because even if we do get good laws on the books, even if we do manage to lock up the people who do this, there is no guarantee that the pictures will ever go away. There is no guarantee that we will create a society in which this doesn’t happen, and if it does happen, that it won’t ruin a woman’s life. So one thing I am trying to learn from conferences like this is how do we try to make a world in which this does not happen. We are given this opportunity to have a conversation about norms, and about consent, and about the fact that
everybody is entitled to a world in which consenting to one thing does not mean they consent to something else. How do we get to that world, how much does the law play a role in that, how much should technology be playing a role in that? But I think the most haunting question for me is why don’t most people care enough make sure this becomes a priority?

**DUNN:** I am going to talk about campus-based activism taking it from the campus level and bringing it national. I myself am a survivor. I ended up having to fight the system that didn’t protect me. I filed a Title IX complaint, but the United States Department of Education said, “Your school actually didn’t do anything wrong.” I just gave up until 2010 when a journalist decided to investigate and I decided to be very public about everything I went through. As a result, in 2011, the Vice President and the United States Department of Education worked together to improve Title IX. They came out with a very strong guidance saying, “You cannot do this to victims any more” and “We are not going to rubber stamp what you do any more.” To me it was justice. Since then, I have tried to improve the laws. I know a lot of people have talked about getting past legal systems, well I believe that if there is a structure that is oppressive you must change that structure.

I am going to quickly talk about the laws. We are going to talk a little bit about Title IX and the Clery Act. Title IX prevents sex-based discrimination. It was originally passed in 1972 to make sure that women were not kept out of professional schools, but over time the United States Supreme Court said, “Whoa, it is not just sex discrimination that keeps women out of institutions, once women are there if you are harassing them or abusing them or if you are making them do sexual favors or feeling threatened to even be there, that is sex discrimination.” There is also a guidance called “The Dear Colleague Letter” (“DCL”). I put up information on KNOW YOUR IX,¹³ which is an amazing student-based organization that took all the law and all the details and broke it down simple and easy.

Another law is the Clery Act. I always want to start with talking about who it is named after—Jeanne Clery. She was raped and murdered in her dorm room by a fellow student back when college crime was never talked about. Because of the work of Jeanne’s family, campus crime is now reported. Campuses have an independent responsibility to report campus crime, and this is important, since a lot of campuses have their own police forces. Over time the Clery Act expanded to require education. Campuses had to talk about sexual assaults and rape and make sure that people know that there is a process for reporting and what your rights are as a victim. It also requires timely warnings. When The

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Virginia Tech shooting happened, there were no timely warning and the university got fined. People’s lives would have been saved had students known that there was an ongoing risk. Timely warnings are actually part of Cleary Act. If there is an ongoing risk, people must be made aware.

Finally, the most recent law the Campus SAVE Act in the 2013 Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization expanded all these Clery Act requirements, to require reporting beyond sexual assault to recognize the spectrum of gender violence: domestic violence, stalking, and dating violence. It made the requirements for education on sexual assault more explicit. Universities have to talk about bystander intervention and consent. They must have ongoing education for staff, students, and everyone. It also improved rights; making sure that if survivors use the process it is an equal and fair process. That is just a brief overview of those two laws. There is a lot more detail to them. Go to KNOW YOUR IX’s website, because they have it in a simple format.

So let’s talk a little bit about activism. The IX Network organized a protest at the United States Department of Education, armed with over a 100,000 signatures from survivors across the country who flew in and mobilized together. We wanted proactive enforcement. We told the Department, “Do not wait for survivors to know their rights. When you know that there is a problem, you see that report in the media, you come in yourself.” We also wanted timely investigations. My complaint took two years to investigate, and I know someone whose took 4 years. We also wanted transparency. No one knows how many Title IX complaints have been filed. Nobody knows where they are in the process. Lastly, we wanted guidance on cultural competency. We do not talk about same sex violence; we do not talk about LGBTQ violence. We had those survivors saying, “Campuses do not recognize violence against me and this needs to change.” So that IX Network protest demands were adopted by the President is very empowering.

I will describe some areas of activism both on the campus and the National level. On Campus we are not seeing policies that address every aspect of gender violence. It is very much stuck in the heterosexual norm. Policies also need to be simple and accessible. You can let people know about their rights. Get faculty involved. We have had more and more faculty start putting information on their syllabi or having discussions in their class raising awareness. At the national level, help us protest the United States Department of Education. As much as we are working with the President, we are very much critical. To date, no one has ever been sanctioned by the Department of Education. There have been zero consequences after all these Title IX complaints. We are also looking at how we can work with military academies. Right now Title IX specifically does not apply to military academies. This occurred because
military was a sexist organization and they were allowed to discriminate, but well now they are not. So why doesn’t Title IX apply? That’s the next step in our movement is to combine that effort.

In Clery activism there are lots of critiques of Cleary. One problem is that universities only have to report crimes if they learn about them, which gives campuses an incentive to not learn about them. So right now there is a push to have victimization surveys. You have to know all the crimes that are happening on campus, and then you can compare the number with the ones that were reported. That gap in between is your culture; that is what you have to change.