

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT ENDOWMENT FUNDS

Nathan Deutsch Development Fund

Award Date: Spring 2018

Proposal Title: Gender, Social Injustice, and Sexual Assault

Principal Investigator: Jody Long

Other Investigators: Evi Taylor, Rejoice Addae

College of Nursing & Health Professions

Department of Social Work

ABSTRACT

This investigative research found that globally one in three women experiences sexual or physical abuse over the course of a lifetime. An unacceptably common experience, sexual assault presents an internationally public health crisis. Sexual assault is the most underreported crime, and sexual assault survivors are the most disenfranchised population.

Internationally only sixteen percent of sexual assault are reported to police - little wonder given that only five percent of reported assaults result in convictions. Victims internalize social stigma attached to sexual assault, often developing mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, substance use, posttraumatic stress disorder and suicidal behaviors.

Sexual assault is a crime fueled by power over and control of those who lack the resource and recourse of justice. Rape Culture thrives throughout the world, perpetuating rape myths, objectifying women sexually, and legitimizing sexual aggression primarily against women. Rape culture provides a framework for blaming the victim: International courts were reluctant to define sexual assault until 1998. For decades and across many societies, rape culture has remained potent and pervasive.

Extensive worldwide violence against women and girls requires intensive actions. Government and civic leaders need to commit sufficient financial resources to ensure their verbal commitments result in real change. Police forces need to tackle gender inequity, focusing on prevention at every level of society. Leaders need to promote social change that is dedicated to human rights for women and girls around the world.

Sexual assault has become an epidemic with news accounts occurring almost daily. Presenting this research will enhance Arkansas State University as a leader in addressing sexual assault. Positioning Arkansas State University as a national leader with addressing and intervening with sexual assault will increase the university's notoriety.