

# Case Study

## Chapter 7

Betty is an eighteen-year-old student who is in her first-year university living in residence. At the end of September, she is invited to a party at another dorm room. She's looking forward to the party and meeting new people since she's in a new city. She hasn't made any close friends yet. Upon arriving, she is offered a drink by a male student living in the room. Shortly thereafter, she feels light-headed. She doesn't remember much of the night, but she knows that she regained consciousness on a bed in the room, and was in pain without her clothing. She didn't tell anyone or report the incident because she couldn't remember what happened. She's struggling with the incident and is now depressed and cannot focus on school.

- 1. Who is more likely to be a victim of sexual assault? Why is this the case in our society?**
- 2. What could the student do after the assault?**
- 3. What resources and support are necessary for survivors of sexual assault?**
- 4. Why might sexual assault be underreported?**
- 5. How might rape culture be contributing to Betty's struggle with what happened to her?**

### Sample Answers:

1. According to the text, “women’s risk of violent victimization is 20 per cent higher than that for men in Canada (Perreault, 2015)” Certain groups of women, such as young women, Indigenous women, and women with disabilities, are even more likely to be victimized. Some sociologists would suggest that this is due to inequalities in our society.
2. The student could have reported the assault to police who might have recommended a toxicology report and exam to find out the extent of injuries, and possibly charged the perpetrator with criminal charges. She could have reported the incident to her school since it happened on campus and involved other students. The school might have investigated the incident, meted out consequences to the perpetrator (such as expulsion) and may have taken other measures to ensure the safety of the victim, including changing class schedules, if needed and requiring that the perpetrator(s) find another place to live. However, it’s important to let victims decide how to handle the incident themselves, to believe them if they do report an incident, and to encourage them to get help so they can begin the healing process.
3. Survivors need access to counselling on campus and/or a sexual assault centre for trauma, anxiety and depression, all common response to sexual assault. They require 24/7 support and need to be able to call a distress centre. The educational institution also needs to treat such cases with seriousness and sensitivity, beginning from a place of belief and investigating allegations fully.

4. According to the text, “Data from Statistics Canada (Sinha, 2015) indicate that roughly 88 per cent of women who have been sexually assaulted in the past 12 months do not report their assault to the police. This may be due to so many reported sexual assaults being dropped as “unfounded” before any investigation occurs; as well, a woman’s likelihood of being believed is a “lottery” based on where she lives (Doolittle, 2017).” Those who do report it can be further victimized by police who are insensitive or dismissive and a trial system that can shame women who come forward.
  
5. From the book, “Specifically, rape myths, which are inaccurate beliefs about what “real” or “legitimate” sexual violence looks like, often influence how survivors, their communities, and the law enforcement officers they seek help from understand sexual violence (Reling et al., 2018). For example, rape myths about how a victim must dress and act to be considered blameless can influence whether a sexual assault case is reported to the police and whether it is taken seriously by the survivor’s community”. It is very possible that Betty is thinking about her own behaviour from the night and using it to incorrectly take responsibility for the crime that was perpetrated on her, or downplaying the crime that was committed based on her false perceptions of what sexual violence looks like.