

False Reports of Rape

What do the Numbers Tell Us?

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In the public discourse on sexual assault, no topic generates as much controversy or emotion as false reports. On one side, some people assert that a majority of rape reports are ultimately proven to have been false allegations. On the other side, some people assert that false reports are almost non-existent. Unfortunately, the debate is typically marked by a lot of heat, and very little light.

This presentation will add light to the heat by surveying decades of research on false rape reports, and by providing details of a new study recently completed by the speaker. For many years, researchers around the world have been attempting to study the phenomenon of false reports. Their efforts have clearly demonstrated that it is extremely difficult to conduct careful, systematic research of this topic. However, their efforts have also yielded reasonably consistent findings.

This talk will provide a clear explanation of the complexities of conducting research on false reports, including the complications of how rape cases are classified and how false reports are defined. It will separate out the good, reliable studies from the ones that can't be interpreted.

Finally, it will provide an answer to the question: "What do the numbers tell us?"