

Freshman Safe Start- Knowledge is Power

Safe Start is a mandatory safety education and sexual assault prevention program presented to all first year students residing in campus housing. Safe Start is a joint effort developed through the CSU, Chico Police Department's Community Service Unit in collaboration with the Associated Students Women's Center, the Counseling and Wellness Center and University Housing. This current study assessed learning outcomes reported by Safe Start participants attending training given the fall semester of 2008.

Participants and Program

1469 first year students participated in mandatory one hour workshops during orientation week (i.e., the week before classes begin the fall semester). A total of thirty workshops were given to small audiences separated by gender over a span of five days. Presentations were given jointly by representatives from the University Police Department, Counseling and Wellness Center and the AS Women's Center. Workshop and scheduling and attendance compliance was arranged by personnel at University Housing. As much as possible, male presenters presented to male groups and female presenters presented to female groups.

The program focuses on raising awareness about the "Red Zone" (Warshaw, 1988). The Red Zone is a period of time at the beginning of the fall semester when students may be at increased risk for experiencing sexual assault or unwanted sexual encounters. Through a variety of presentations, including personal narratives videos and dialogues, students are challenged to consider the many risks they could face in their first few weeks of school. They are taught strategies to ensure their safety and success and are educated to be aware of the many reasons students may let their guard down in a small college town. The general training topics include general safety tips, sexual assault awareness and prevention, dating violence and intimate partner violence, and stalking. In addition, presenters talk about the various resources available for students as they negotiate normal first-year stressors.

Learning Outcome Study

This program is in its third year. Each year participants are asked to rate how well they like and how effective the program is. For the first two years the feedback from students has been very positive. Students feel the information is well presented, informative and helpful. This year, an additional question was asked to assess what students felt they learned from the presentations.

Assessment methods

All participants filled out paper and pencil surveys which asked very basic demographic information (e.g. age, gender, and ethnicity), four items assessing the program

importance and effectiveness, and an open ended item asking them to name three things they had learned from the presentations. In addition, participants were asked to rate the presenters and comment on presenters as well as mention improvements they would like to see made in the program.

A sample of 778, out of 1469 surveys, was coded into a SPSS data base set up by a graduate student interning in the counseling center from the anthropology department. This sample represented students from a sample of presentations which ensured that all counselors were represented in the data analyzed. Each of eight counseling staff presenters read feedback and assisted with data coding and entry of their presentation responses into SPSS. This method was used to be sure presenters read feedback students had provided about the presentations that they had given.

Demographic information about the sample of participants is presented in the tables below.

Table 1 Gender and Ethnicity of Sample Participants

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Female	502	64.4
Male	276	35.5
Caucasian	600	77
Hispanic	58	7.5
Bi-Racial or Mixed	50	6.5
Black	26	3.3
Asian	21	2.7
Native American	3	0.4
Other	5	0.6

Table 2 Ages of Sample Participants

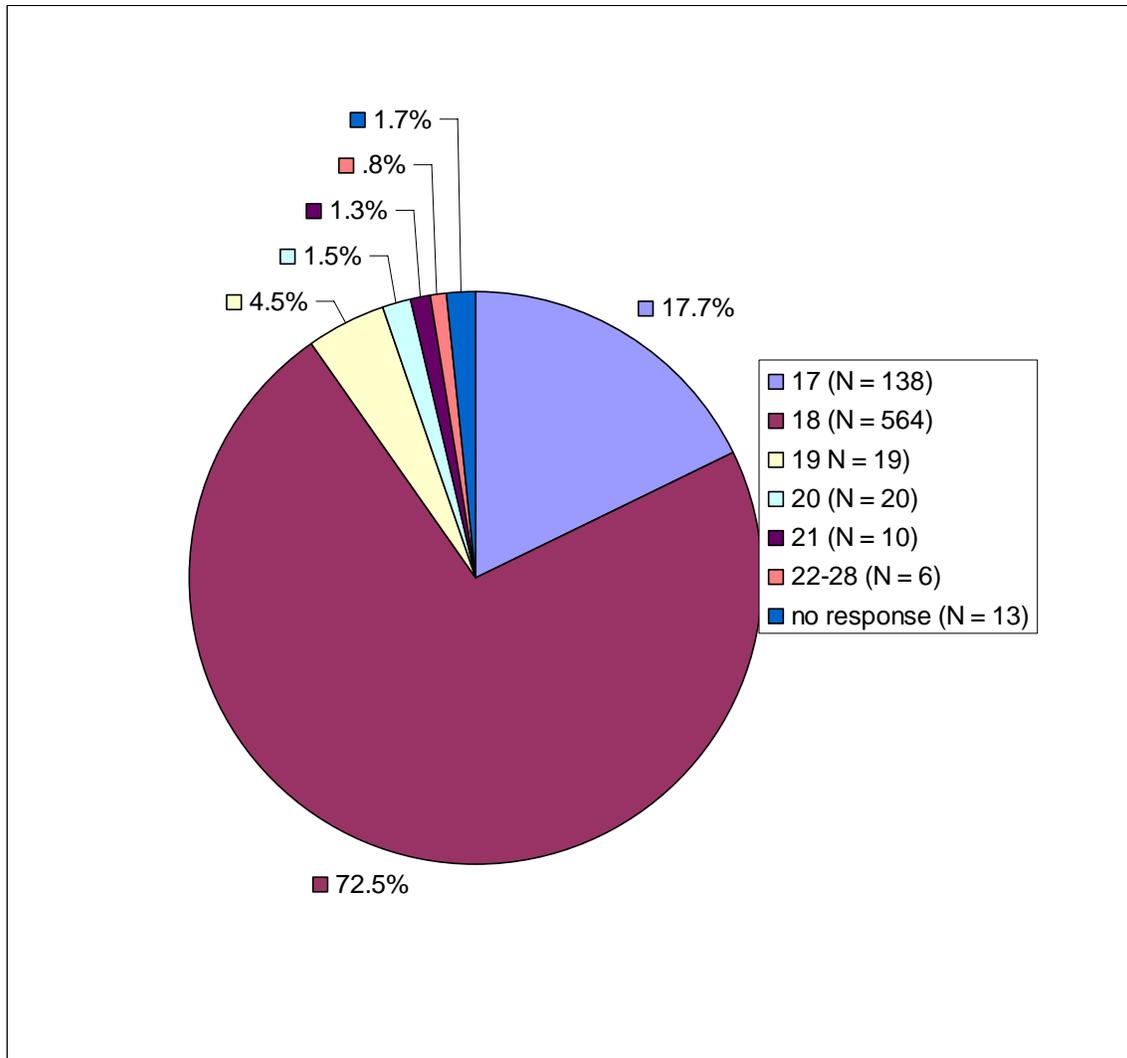


Table 3 Participants' Rating of Program Effectiveness

What I learned from the Freshman Safe Start Program will be important to my college experience.	97% agreed (N = 755)
The program was NOT effective in teaching me how to address risky behaviors.	92.5% disagreed (N = 720)
The program was effective in informing me about sexual assault and dating violence.	97.4% agreed (N = 758)
The program was effective in facilitating awareness about safety issues on campus.	98.4% agreed (N = 765)

Learning Outcomes

Both women and men were asked to name “three things they had learned that will help them achieve a safe start” from presentations given. The results were coded into the following categories presented below.

Information on sexual assault

About date rape drugs
Definition of sexual assault
Facts statistics regarding rape
How to avoid being raped/sexually assaulted
What constitutes consent
Type of people rapists are
Rapists are often people you know
Timely reporting
Avoid self blame

Avoiding Trouble

Safe sex
How not to get arrested (trip to Oroville)
Be smart/think before acting
How to drink safely
Red cup = Red flag
Rules and laws regarding alcohol/
Drugs/violence and how they are enforced
Avoiding frat parties/places with bad reputations
Don't blame self
What is socially acceptable behavior
Anyone can be at risk

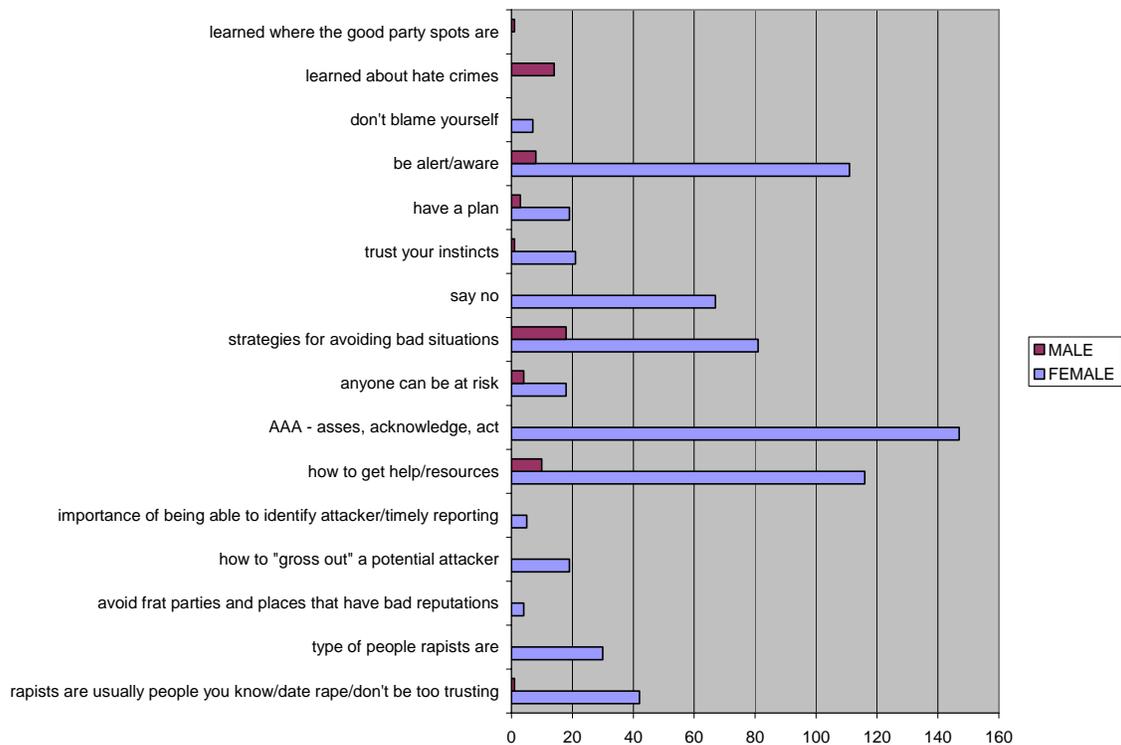
Safety tips-prevention

- Chico safe rides
- Buddy system
- Protection devices(whistle, voice, pepper spray)
- Don't talk on cell phone while walking
- Strategies for getting out of bad situation
- Don't be afraid to be aggressive/rude/assertive
- How to gross out a potential attacker
- Assess/Acknowledge/Act
- Trust instincts
- Have a plan
- Say no
- Be alert/aware
- Info on hate crimes

Other

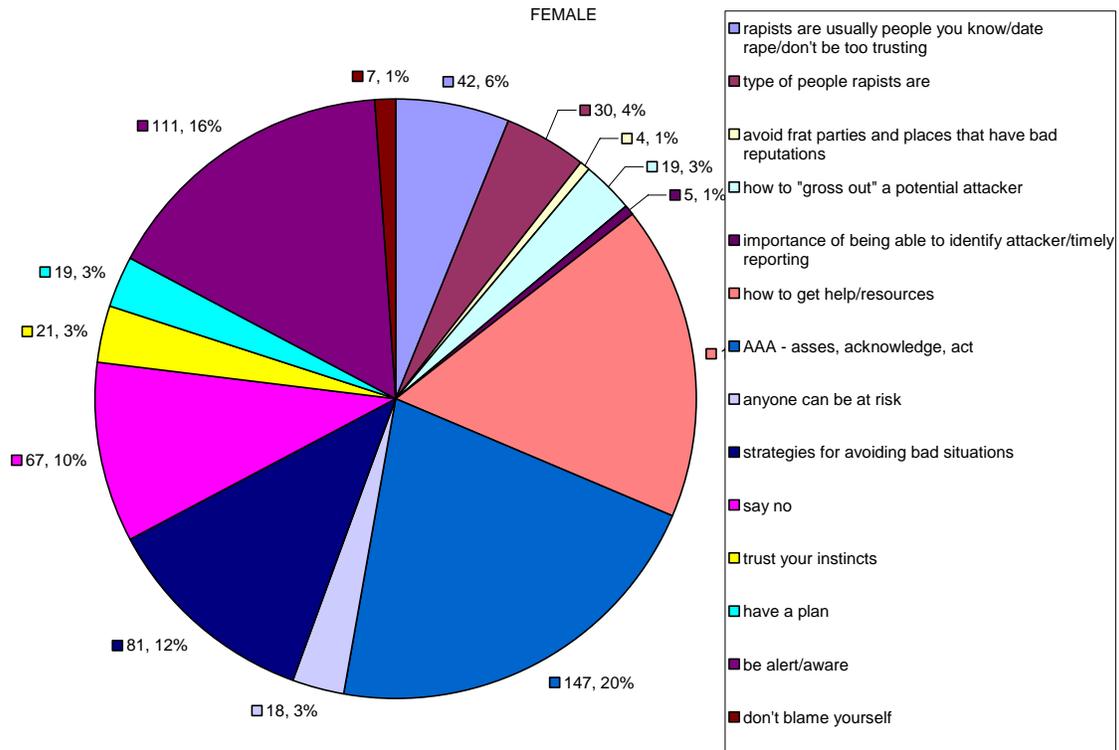
- Includes "wise ass" comments (usually from men)
- No response Thing 1 (29) Thing 2 (52) Thing 3 (92)

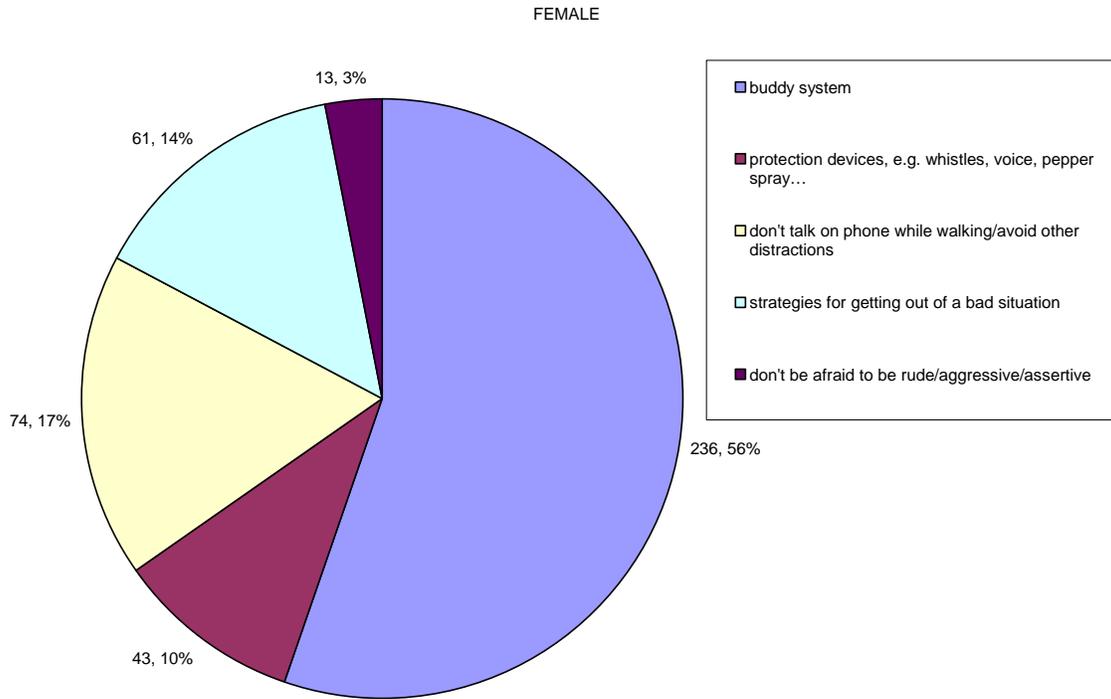
When it came to prevention strategies, women overall, offered more strategies they had learned compared to men. Men seem to report gaining information. The chart below is an example of this gender disparity.



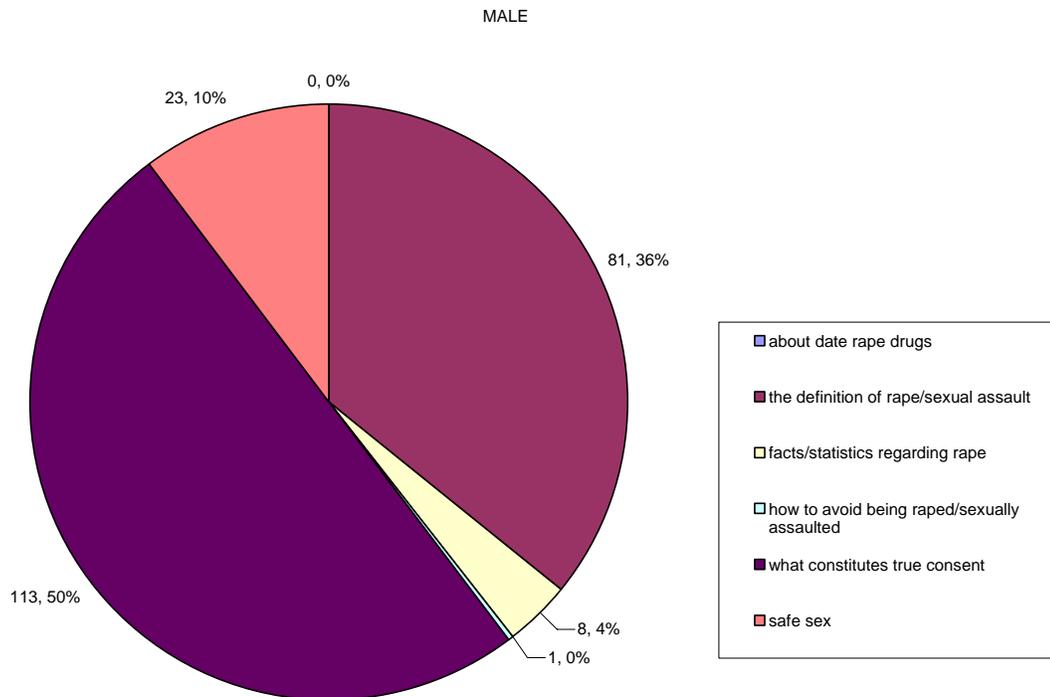
Because of this gender disparity, learning outcomes are presented separately by gender. Overall, the majority of women's responses fell into many more categories (19) as compared to men (6).

Below, the women's outcomes are presented in two pie charts- as it is easier to read the variety of responses is the date is split in this way.





Men's' report of majority responses of what they learned easily fit into one pie chart.



The above findings well illustrates the extreme burden put on women as they strive to ensure their personal safety. There is much that continually needs to be remembered and

acted upon. It also, sadly, can illustrate how easily victims can fall prey to self blame. From clinical work with survivors, I have observed thinking goes something like this. "If I only didn't do _____(fill in the blank--- hint it is one of action contained in the 19 categories of things that must be remembered and acted on... even in the most ambiguous of situations) to guarantee my personal safety, then it really was my fault."

Students were also asked to give comments on how the program could be improved. Most students did not comment. Comments made were categorized below according to frequency.

Program does not require improvement	144
Better video/ slide show/materials	37
Other negative comments	10
Teach simple self defense moves	8
Topic not relevant	5
More chairs	4
Need to speak louder	4
Give out free pepper spray/other supplies	4
More advice/hints	4
Handouts/list of phone numbers	2
Have sessions later in the day	2
Include males in female sessions	2
Talk about personal limits/drinking habits	2
Liked that presenters were all women in women's program	2
Free condoms	2
Ask people to turn off cell phones	1
Have protection items there for purchase	1
Make program mandatory	1
Refreshments	1
Discussion of same sex rape	1
Offer RAD in dorm buildings	1
Better audience control/don't let people talk over presenters	1
Focus more on consequences	1
Offer it sooner	1
Include women in men's program	1
Make available on CD	1
Spend more time discussing what to do if you are drunk and can't go back to the dorm/safe place to go if drunk	1
Demonstrate how to use pepper spray	1
More info on available programs/resources	1
Bring in samples of date rape drugs	1

Discussion

Based on students effectiveness ratings and the variety of learning outcomes reported, we believe the program continues to be successful and worth repeating. It is our intention to use student feedback, as we have done in the past two previous assessments, to continue to improve our program.

Despite a few complaints (mostly from men) the majority of students are satisfied with our program. Our next step in analysis will be to begin to identify some direct measures of program success (e.g., early reporting of sexual assault as prognosis is better for early interventions, utilization rates of safe rides, prosecution/incarceration/sanction of offenders, and reduction in the number of women who withdraw from school for personal reasons). A two month post presentation survey undertaken last year revealed that students had remembered what they had learned (e.g., about consensual sex, how to be safe), felt safer, were comfortable seeking help from UPD and counseling, and felt the program was helpful and should be mandatory. The program was relevant as 92% of the sample surveyed admitted to attending a party in which alcohol was served (see appendix A for study results).

Anecdotally, every year, sometime after our presentations have been made, we have heard reports from women that something they learned at our presentation has kept someone from harm (i.e. prevented a date rape drug from being ingested, students tell us they have walked strangers home when they saw they were too intoxicated to do so safely alone.

Thus are goal is to continue this program with the hope of expanding our audience to all incoming students- not just students residing in housing.