



Sexual Assault Kits and the Criminal Justice System's Response
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In the United States, the criminal justice system's response to sexual assault is a contributing factor as to why sexual assault remains a prevalent and pervasive issue. Sexual Assault Kits (SAKs) provide evidence not only about a crime, but how the criminal justice system responds to sexual assault, and how the system in place treats victims of sexual assault. Up until recently, Sexual Assault Kits have been extensively backlogged and have remained untested or partially tested. The information on sexual assault and the research surrounded untested SAKs is very limited. For this research project I have assisted in creating and updating a database for the 3000+ SAKs in Utah, that have remained untested or partially tested. The database that houses all the SAK information, will be used to help predict whether SAKs get submitted, what impact SAKs have on case outcome, and how satisfied victims are with the overall criminal justice system response and process. So far, the data has shown that the criminal justice response could be updated to better equip how to handle sexual assault cases. Clearly, a lot of the cases adhere to the norms of rape culture; where the victim is blamed for the crime or people question the victim's credibility. The question as to how to fix the backlogging problem remains unanswered, and questions as to how to implement a nationwide update on how the criminal justice system handles sexual assault remains up in the air. The importance of this research project is incredibly high, because this topic needs to be discussed and researched in order for any productive and effective changes to happen.