

Understanding the Psychology of Offenders and Victim- Perpetrator Dynamics

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Counterintuitive Victim Behaviors

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Counterintuitive Victim Behavior

“Behavior of the victim during or following an assault that, on the surface, does not make sense, runs counter to common sense, or is unexpected.”

Victim Counterintuitive Behaviors

- Not fighting or resisting during the assault
- Not escaping when had opportunity
- Not yelling when others in the vicinity
- Delaying disclosure
- Continuing contact with the offender
- Having sex, sleeping after the assault
- Texting, calling, dating the perpetrator

Pretend Normal

- Acting “normal”
 - Going to school
 - Playing sports
 - Shopping, partying, going to work
 - No overt display of distress, trauma, assault
 - Actions that cover up the assault (makeup over bruises)

What happens if you fall down in public?

First thought: Not making a scene

Other Post-Offense Behavior

- Having sex with another/the offender
- Partying, seeming “normal”
- Doing “fine” afterward
- Discussing it with friends without calling it “rape”
- Acting “as if” nothing happened

Problem is

- There is no one reaction to sexual assault.
- There are a variety of reactions – some of whom are counterintuitive.

- The problem is not victim behavior.
- The problem is that the “audience” has faulty expectations.

Faulty Expectations

- Retrospective view
 - Clear it was a sexual assault
- At the time
 - Where was the line crossed?
 - Was it crossed?
 - What is happening? Is it OK? Why is it happening?
 - Is this my fault?

Victims believe myths, too!

Women who say they have had intercourse through force or the threat of force

½ think they were raped

(Bonner & Parrot, 1997; Koss, 1985)

Faulty Expectations

Super Hero Myths

If it were a sexual assault, I would have automatically:

- Run out of the room
- Fought him off
- Never seen him again
- Called police immediately

All rapes aren't violent stranger rapes

But

The reactions we expect:

Occur in violent stranger rapes

~~W/~~
This counselor questions why Student waited
over 1 month to disclose. Also, Mom reports
that Student's relationship w/ Step-Dad has
been amicable. ~~Mom reported~~ ^{Step} Dad

~~and that during the time that~~
~~she was present~~

“This counselor questions why student waited over 1 month to disclose. Also, mom reports that student’s relationship with step-dad has been amicable.”

Revealed abuse to anyone as children

10 Retrospective Studies

1/3 revealed abuse

Cases reported to authorities

10% - 18%

(London et al., 2005)

When Sexual Assault Meets the Myth

When sexual assault like myth,
Victim's behaviors meet expectations.

When sexual assault not like myth,
Definition of victim and offender different
Social support different
Victim blame different

Stereotypical Rape

- Stranger
- Violent
- Injuries
- Forceful resistance
- Victim defines self as raped

Stereotypical Rape

- Reporting = faster, help-seeking, interest in law enforcement
- Community = supportive of victim, decrease in blaming
- Offender = Clearly defined, held accountable, typically limited contact with/influence over the victim
- Victim = no contact with offender, sees self as

What Crimes Invite Counterintuitive Behavior?

- Dating relationship
- Intra-familial sexual assault or exploitation (e.g., children, family members)
- Non-strangers (e.g., friends, co-workers)

Pressure cooker
(McElvaney, 2012)

Conflicting Behavioral Expectations

Social Relationships

- Trustworthy
- Ongoing relationship
- Be nice to person
- Do not make a scene
- Not going to harm you
- Continue with normal relationship
- Would not sexually assault you

Sexual Assault

- Betrays trust
- Uses ongoing relationship
- Nice before & after
- Relies on social norms
- Denies he is harming you
- Pretend normal
- Gas lighting

Counterintuitive Victim Behavior

Result of clash between social norms for how we
are supposed to treat social/family relationships

and

Reality of sexual assault

Clash between social relationship
expectations and sexual assault

Not the only force

Defining the response to child sexual abuse

What Influences Victim Response?

Internal Factors

Culture

Religion

Gender issues

What Influences Victim Response?

Internal Factors

Socialization to aggression and sexuality

Culture? Home? Prior assaults?

What Influences Victim Response?

Internal Factors

Feelings of shame, blame, embarrassment

Self-blame vs. helplessness

What Influences Victim Response?

Internal Factors

Attribution of own responsibility for assault

Confusion about offense/offender

What Influences Victim Response?

Internal Factors

Fear of penalty for reporting/not being believed

Fear of legal system

One Response to Sexual Assault?

Seriously?

What Influences Victim Response?

External Factors

- The access to services and support system
- Consequences to offender & community
- Role of the offender in the community
- Consequences of reporting

Offender's Influence on the Truth

- Offenders manipulate the experience of the assault on the victim, influencing or changing the victim's truth of the abuse:

Offender's Influence on the Victim's Perception of the Offense

- Minimizing the offense
- Not acting like a rapist or abuser
- Using the victim's sexual response against her
- Using the victim's confusion against her
- Using the victim's attachment/dependency
- Using the victim's past
- Gas lighting

Gas Lighting

- Slapping someone in a restaurant and pretending they didn't.
- Raping a young woman and sending a text the next day saying they had a wonderful time
- Asking for another date
- Continuing with the evening, e.g., going to the movies
- In families – even easier – just continue with family life

Offender's Status in the Community

Victim's social supports are critical. Offender support in the community/family can:

- Isolate the victim
- Discourage victims from reporting abuse
- Groom the audience

Offender's Status in the Community

- “Prove” to the victim you can’t rely on the community/criminal justice system
- Use third parties to influence victims
- Manipulate the victim’s emotions
- Threaten the victim

One Response?

Pressure Cooker

Internal pressure to tell

Fear of consequences

What's the Problem

Offender's Counterintuitive Behavior

Produces

Victim Counterintuitive Behavior

Perp's Counterintuitive Behavior

- “Kindness” following violence
- Professions of love
- “Forgetting” or acting normal

Perp's Counterintuitive Behavior

- Projections of blame
- Redefining the truth
- Giving “control” to victim
- Guilt/distress or callousness over behavior

I am lying in bed alone now. I fear that I have hurt you badly. I taped your feet together and slapped you in the face. I can hear you downstairs crying and my heart is hurting. I want to go down and comfort you, but I know that you do not want me too. Now you are leaving. You said that you don't feel safe here. That hurt me. I want you to feel safe in my arms. I do not know how long I can endure this. I simply wanted to lie down and read at 10:00 P.M. You whined that you did not want the light on so I begged you to let me read. I finally compromised and turned it off. I said good night and I love you, this is your last. I want you to let me sleep. You refused. I tried to just lie quietly but you yelled and started pushing and pulling me. I finally held on to my stomach and held on.

- I am lying in bed alone now. I fear that I have hurt you badly. I taped your feet together and slapped you in the face. I can hear you downstairs crying and my heart is hurting.
- I simply wanted to lie down and read at 10:00 p.m. You whined that you did not want the light on so I begged you to let me read.
- So I beg you to let me sleep. You refused.

to the bed. Every time you tried to role me over I would just hold on tighter. You yelled and then I had enough when you tried to pull on my face. I grabbed your hand and pinned it under me. I had you pinned so you could not move so you bit me. I twisted your hand. You gave up so I let you go. You start hitting me so I role over and pinn both of your arms and press on your forehead to restrain you from biting. You are acting like a crazy person now. You start to kick and wiggle. I have to use a more uncomfortable method to restrain you. I was not choking you. I had you in a hold that caused you to choke yourself the more you struggled. It is very safe and effective. I let you go. Right after I let go of you, you hit me right in the face. I felt a hard pop in my eye. It stunned me enough that I just sat back and calmed down.

Every time you tried to role me over I would just hold on tighter. You yelled and then I had enough when you tried to pull on my face. I grabbed your hand and pinned it under. I had you pinned so you could not move.

You start hitting me so I role over and pinn both of your arms and press on your forehead to restrain you from biting. You are acting like a crazy person now.

to the bed. Every time you tried to roll me over, I would just hold on tighter. You yelled and then I had enough when you tried to pull on my face. I grabbed your hand and pinned it under me. I had you pinned so you could not move so you bit me. I twisted your hand. You gave up so I let you go. You start hitting me so I roll over and pin both of your arms and press on your forehead to restrain you from biting. You are acting like a crazy person now. You start to kick and wiggle. I have to use a more uncomfortable method to restrain you. I was not choking you. I had you in a hold that caused you to choke yourself the more you struggled. It is very safe and effective. I let you go. Right after I let go of you, you hit me right in the face. I felt a hard pop in my eye. It stunned me enough that I just sat back and calmed down.

- I have to use a more uncomfortable method to restrain you. I was not choking you. I had you in a hold that caused you to choke yourself.
- Right after I let go of you, you hit me right in the face.
- It stunned me enough that I just sat back and calmed down.

a little. I got out of bed and went to look at my eye. I think it will be black tomorrow. You called me a pussy and said that you hope it is black. I had had enough of your mouth so I slapped you in it. After that I went downstairs for some cool off time for you. I went out to the car and got some tape. I came back upstairs. You wanted an apology. I felt like you deserve it. So I apologize to you for hitting you. I lay down and you want me to sleep downstairs. NOT GONNA HAPPEN. We fight some more and I cuddle you up and give you a kiss. You start getting violent again. So I get up and warn you that if you don't behave, that I will tape you up. You did not listen. You get violent again. So... I tape your feet together. I warn you to be nice. You refuse and start hitting me again. So I pin your hands and start to get the tape ready. You freak out. I decide to let you go. I start to take it off your feet but you keep squirming. You start hitting me

I had enough of your mouth so I slapped you in it. After that I went downstairs for some cool off time for you. I went to the car and got some tape. We fight some more and I cuddle you up and give you a kiss. You start getting violent again. So I get up and I warn you that if you don't behave that I will tape you up. You did not listen.

I so I pin your arms like
back. I could have easily
trained you now, but again
you. after you swear to
when I release you,
get up and leave.

I hate fighting with you. I wish
you would have just respected
this enough to ~~have let me~~
up. I never would seriously
hurt you. I was completely in control
of actions. Every restraining
issue I used on you is self
uses only discomfort.

I love you and hope you
it back home safe.

I could have easily
restrained you now, but
again I release you after
you swear to behave.

I hate fighting with you.
If you would have just
respected my wishes.

I would never seriously
hurt you. I was
completely in control of
my actions.

I love you.

Reality is a consensual experience.

Blaming Questions

- Why didn't you tell me?
- Why did you do _____ (drink, chat, sext)

ASK: What Made You Tell?

Disclosure Triggers

- Escalation of the offender
- Fear of or knowledge of other victims
- Greater information of victim
- Increase in symptoms of victim

ASK: What Made You Tell?

- Increased social supports
- Medical issues (pregnancy, STDs)
- Forced disclosure