CIB #3: Delayed Disclosure

The CIB expert will often address why the complaining witness delayed disclosing or provided "piecemeal" disclosure.

- Not sure it was rape
- Fear
- Belief that it will not do any good
- Anger comes later or from another party (e.g., best friend) who encourages reporting
- Indirect or encouraged disclosure
- Culture and socialization to systems
- Potential Consequences

Research Articles on Delayed or Piecemeal Disclosure

Minimizing negative experiences: Women's disclosure of partner abuse.

Dunham, Katherine, Senn, Charlene Y.

Journal of Interpersonal Violence, Vol 15(3), Mar, 2000. pp. 251-261.

Abstract:

This study documented the prevalence of omitting information about abuse that occurred in intimate relationships in disclosures to friends and relatives and explored factors that might predict minimization. 306 female college students (aged 17–51 yrs) were recruited for the study. The results revealed that 36.1% of women who disclosed abuse to friends and relatives omitted information. A stepwise logistic regression indicated increased severity of abuse, more accepting attitudes toward physical abuse, and delayed disclosure were each positively associated with minimization. The authors tentatively suggest that this phenomenon can be viewed as an attempt to manage confidants' reactions to disclosure of abuse and enhance the likelihood of social support. Whether providing an incomplete picture of the situation serves to facilitate or undermine the quality of social support received is an empirical question that must be explored.

What factors predict women's disclosure of sexual assault to mental health professionals?

Starzynski, Laura L., Ullman, Sarah E., Townsend, Stephanie M., Long, LaDonna M., Long, Susan M.

Journal of Community Psychology, Vol 35(5), Jul, 2007. pp. 619-638.

Abstract:

Although many sexual assault survivors seek support from mental health sources for adverse psychological symptoms due to sexual assault, many do not. A diverse sample of adult sexual assault survivors was surveyed about their sexual assault experiences, social reactions received when disclosing assault, attributions of blame, coping strategies, and psychological symptomatology. Statistical analyses were run to identify demographic, assault, and postassault factors differentiating women who disclosed from those who did not disclose sexual assault to mental health sources. Both demographic (race, sexual orientation, and age) and postassault factors (posttraumatic stress disorder [PTSD] symptom severity, number of informal support sources told, receipt of tangible aid0information support) significantly predicted assault disclosure. Implications of the results are discussed.

Why, how often, and to whom do women disclose, and what factors influence whether disclosure is healing?

Ullman, Sarah E.

Talking about sexual assault: Society's response to survivors. Ullman, Sarah E.; pp. 41-57. Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association, 2010. x, 210 pp.

Abstract:

(from the chapter) Before considering the effects of social reactions to victims of rape, it is important to step back and consider what we know from empirical research about women's disclosure of sexual assault. Although in chapter 2 I discussed various theories and models for

disclosure, it is important to listen to women to understand their decisions about disclosing. This may reveal why women often decide not to talk about rape and what actually happens when they do disclose to others. Such investigation can provide critical information about the societal context that needs to be addressed to improve rape prevention and treatment. There are significant data that address why women do and do not talk about and report sexual assault to others, including formal authorities. In this chapter, I review several topics, including women's reasons for disclosing or not disclosing, prevalence of disclosure, factors related to likelihood and timing of disclosure, and the effects of disclosing sexual assault.

Barriers to reporting sexual victimization: Prevalence and correlates among undergraduate women.

Zinzow, Heidi, Thompson, Martie,

Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma, Vol 20(7), Oct, 2011. pp. 711-725.

Abstract:

This study examined the frequency and correlates of barriers to reporting sexual victimization to law enforcement. Participants were 127 female undergraduate sexual assault victims who completed self-report surveys. The most frequently reported barriers were "I handled it myself" and "I didn't think it was serious enough." Factor analysis of the reported barriers items revealed two factors: shame/not wanting others involved and did not acknowledge the event as a crime/handled it myself. Shame/not wanting others involved was positively associated with physical injury, being victimized by a relative, and self-blame. Acknowledgment/handled it myself was negatively associated with being victimized by a relative. Findings suggest that intervention efforts should focus on increasing acknowledgment, decreasing negative reactions to disclosure, and decreasing victims' self-blame

To whom do college women confide following sexual assault? A prospective study of predictors of sexual assault disclosure and social reactions.

Orchowski, Lindsay M., Gidycz, Christine A.,

Violence Against Women, Vol 18(3), Mar 2012. pp. 264-288.

Abstract:

A prospective methodology was used to explore predictors of sexual assault disclosure among college women, identify who women tell about sexual victimization, and examine the responses of informal support providers (N = 374). Women most often confided in a female peer. Increased coping via seeking emotional support, strong attachments, and high tendency to disclose stressful information predicted adolescent sexual assault disclosure and disclosure over the 7-month interim. Less acquaintance with the perpetrator predicted disclosure over the follow-up, including experiences of revictimization. Victim and perpetrator alcohol use at the time of the assault also predicted disclosure over the follow-up. Implications are presented.

Expressed sexual assault legal context and victim culpability attributions.

Miller, Audrey K., Markman, Keith D., Amacker, Amanda M., Menaker, Tasha A.

Journal of Interpersonal Violence, Vol 27(6), Apr, 2012. pp. 1023-1039.

Abstract:

Legal scholars have argued that laws have an expressive function, specifically that sexual assault laws may convey social-level messages that victims are culpable for crimes against them. In a university sample, we conducted the first experimental test of legal scholars' proposal, hypothesizing that legal messages—specifically their clarity and effectiveness in conveying that sexual assault is a crime—affect victim culpability attributions. Results demonstrated that greater culpability was attributed to a victim of sexual assault within a context expressing unclear and ineffective sexual assault law than within a context clearly and effectively expressing that sexual assault is a crime. We also garnered empirical support for a mediation model, that is, negative affective reactions to a victim statistically accounted for the relationship between expressed legal context and victim culpability attributions. Implications for future psycholegal research and potential legal reforms are discussed.

College students' social reactions to the victim in a hypothetical sexual assault scenario: The role of victim and perpetrator alcohol use.

Untied, Amy S., Orchowski, Lindsay M., Mastroleo, Nadine, Gidycz, Christine A.

Violence and Victims, Vol 27(6), 2012. pp. 957-972.

Abstract:

College students' responses to a hypothetical sexual assault scenario involving alcohol use by the victim and/or perpetrator were examined (N = 295). Participants reported on victim/ perpetrator responsibility, the extent to which the scenario would be considered rape, and their likelihood of providing positive or negative responses to the victim. Compared to women, men indicated that they would provide more negative and less positive social reactions to the victim, were less likely to identify the scenario as rape, and endorsed less perpetrator responsibility. When the victim was drinking, participants endorsed greater victim responsibility and lower perpetrator responsibility for the assault. Participants indicated that they would provide the victim with less emotional support when only the perpetrator was drinking, compared to when both the individuals were drinking.

Mock juror sensitivity to forensic evidence in drug facilitated sexual assaults.

Schuller, Regina A., Ryan, Alison, Krauss, Daniel, Jenkins, Gwen

International Journal of Law and Psychiatry, Vol 36(2), Mar-Apr, 2013. pp. 121-128.

Abstract:

Mock jurors' reactions to variations in the quality of toxicological evidence regarding the presence of drugs in a sexual assault trial were examined. In Study 1, participants received a trial summary in which a negative test result, a negative test result plus expert testimony, or no test result was presented. The time taken by the complainant to report the alleged sexual assault was manipulated. The negative test result influenced participants' judgments, but this effect was minimized by the presence of expert testimony. The complainant's delay in reporting had little impact on judgments. In Study 2, complainant time to report was again manipulated along with the outcome of the test result (negative finding and no result). Results revealed that men were less conviction prone when the negative test result was obtained early as opposed to late. In contrast, when the test result was unavailable, men were more conviction prone when the complainant reported late as oppose to early.

The effects of receiving a rape disclosure: College friends' stories.

Branch, Kathryn A., Richards, Tara N.,

Violence Against Women, Vol 19(5), May, 2013. pp. 658-670.

Abstract:

Research suggests that college women are at greater risk for rape and sexual assault than women in the general population or in a comparable age group. College women, away from home and family, may turn to friends for support. Friends may experience emotional reactions that affect their own functioning and may not feel they have anywhere to turn. In this study, we interviewed male and female college students who had received a rape disclosure from a friend. Their unique stories provide insight into the secondary effects of rape disclosure on friends. Implications of these findings for college campuses are discussed.

What is the typical response to sexual assault? Reply to Bonanno (2013).

Steenkamp, Maria M., Litz, Brett T., Dickstein, Benjamin D., Salters-Pedneault, Kristalyn, Hofmann, Stefan G.,

Journal of Traumatic Stress, Vol 26(3), Jun, 2013. pp. 394-396.

Abstract:

Reply by the current author to the comments made by George A. Bonanno (see record 2013-20001-012) on the original article (see record 2012-21102-017). We respond to Bonanno's (2013) comment on our longitudinal evaluation of sexual assault survivors. Bonanno posits that minor disruption in functioning is the modal response to any stressor or trauma, yet most women we studied had marked initial symptoms in the immediate months following assault, which gradually improved over time. We argue that sexual violence is one example of intentional and malicious victimization, which differs from other experiences studied by Bonanno, such as spinal cord injury.

Our study also differed from most previous studies in that it specifically examined the acute reactions period, which is the only period that can distinguish between resilience and recovery: Both trajectories ultimately involve good adaptation, but are distinguished by the degree of initial postevent disruption. We address Bonanno's contention that our results should be dismissed on methodological and statistical grounds. Our findings suggest that prior research about the frequency of resilience may in part be confounded by the degree and type of stress exposure

Predictors of delayed disclosure of rape in female adolescents and young adults.
Bicanic, Iva A. E.., Hehenkamp, Lieve M., van de Putte, Elise M., van Wijk, Arjen J., de Jongh, Ad.
European Journal of Psychotraumatology, Vol 6, May 11, 2015. ArtID: 25883

Background: Delayed disclosure of rape has been associated with impaired mental health; it is, therefore, important to understand which factors are associated with disclosure latency. The purpose of this study was to compare various demographics, post-rape characteristics, and psychological functioning of early and delayed disclosers (i.e., more than 1-week post-rape) among rape victims, and to determine predictors for delayed disclosure. Methods: Data were collected using a structured interview and validated questionnaires in a sample of 323 help-seeking female adolescents and young adults (12—25 years), who were victimized by rape, but had no reported prior chronic child sexual abuse. Results: In 59% of the cases, disclosure occurred within 1 week. Delayed disclosers were less likely to use medical services and to report to the police than early disclosers. No significant differences were found between delayed and early disclosers in psychological functioning and time to seek professional help. The combination of age category 12—17 years [odds ratio (OR) 2.05, confidence intervals (CI) 1.13—3.73], penetration (OR 2.36, CI 1.25—4.46), and closeness to assailant (OR 2.64, CI 1.52—4.60) contributed significantly to the prediction of delayed disclosure. Conclusion: The results point to the need of targeted interventions that specifically encourage rape victims to disclose early, thereby increasing options for access to health and police services.

Avoidance symptoms and delayed verbal memory are associated with post-traumatic stress symptoms in female victims of sexual violence.
Shin, Kyoung Min., Chang, Hyoung Yoon., Cho, Sun-Mi., Kim, Nam Hee., Chung, Young Ki.
Journal of Affective Disorders, Vol 184, Sep 15, 2015. pp. 145-148.
Abstract:

Background: Victimization by sexual violence is strongly associated with the development of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). While several psychological and cognitive factors are known to be associated with PTSD prognosis, multivariable analysis is scarce. This study examined factors affecting the severity of PTSD symptoms in early stage of traumatic experience of sexual violence, including initial post-traumatic symptoms and cognitive characteristics. Methods: Participants were recruited from the center for women and children victims of violence in a university hospital. Thirty-four sexual assault victims were assessed at the baseline and the second visit one to five months after the baseline. At the baseline, an array of posttraumatic symptoms and cognitive functions were measured: at follow-up, PTSD symptoms were determined by Clinician Administered PTSD Scale. Results: Stepwise multiple regression showed that avoidance symptoms ($\beta = 0.551$, $P < 0.01$) and delayed verbal memory ($\beta = -0.331$, $P < 0.05$) at early stage of trauma predicted the severity of PTSD symptoms one to five month later. The regression model, factoring in avoidance and delayed verbal memory, showed a 34.9% explanatory power regarding the PTSD symptom severity. Conclusion: This study suggests that avoidance symptoms and verbal memory at the early stage of trauma are associated with later PTSD symptoms. It is also suggested that early intervention targeting avoidance symptoms may be beneficial in decreasing PTSD symptoms

Don't tell: Military culture and male rape.
O'Brien, Carol., Keith, Jessica., Shoemaker, Lisa.
Psychological Services, Vol 12(4), Nov, 2015. Special Issue: Military **Sexual** Trauma. pp. 357-365.
Abstract:

The issue of **sexual assault** that occurs during military service has been a focus of attention over the past several years. Although approximately 50% of survivors of military **sexual assault** are

men, virtually all of the literature focuses on the **assault** of female service members. Research has demonstrated that cultural variables are robust correlates of the **sexual assault** of women. This paper proposes that cultural variables are equally important when examining the rape of men, especially when this **assault** occurs in military contexts. We discuss male rape myths and related constructs as they are expressed within military culture. The results of data analysis from a treatment sample of veterans with military **sexual** trauma (MST)-related posttraumatic **stress** disorder (PTSD) and clinical case examples are presented to further explore the concepts. We conclude that male rape myths and related beliefs that arise from cultural norms and are further amplified and modified by military culture impact male MST survivors and delay or obstruct their recovery. Suggestions for clinical application and future research are offered to encourage further efforts in this important area of practice.