

**“COUNTERINTUITIVE” BEHAVIOR OF VICTIMS OF INTIMATE ASSAULT:  
IS IT THEM OR IS IT US?**

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**WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?**

- “Counterintuitive” 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.

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**EXAMPLES**

- Not fighting or resisting during the assault
- Not telling, delayed telling, or “piecemeal” disclosure
- Continued contact with the offender
  - Sex, sleeping after the assault
  - Texts, calls, dates
  - Not escaping with an opportunity
- Acting “normal”
  - Shopping, partying, going to work
  - No overt display of distress, trauma, assault
  - Actions that cover up the assault (makeup over bruises)

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**PROBLEM IS . . . .**

- There is no “common”, typical, or expected response to an intimate assault.
- Each individual responds individually!

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**S/HE BELIEVES THEM, TOO!**

- Remember the Victim has the same internalized misinformation about “real rape” and “real victims” (as well as myths about offenders) as you, the community, and the jury/judge!
- Research continues to show that the majority of victims of violent crimes do not identify themselves as raped or assaulted even when describing chargeable offenses!

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**FAULTY EXPECTATIONS**

- Counterintuitive behavior is not counterintuitive.
- The audience of the assault has faulty expectations.
- Expectations of victim behaviors are based on “rape myths” that are still prevalent.
  - Stranger
  - Violent or use of significant force
  - Easily identified as an act
  - Preventable
  - Situations that preclude the victim being raped
  - A rapist is a “type”

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This considers questions why student waited over 1 month to disclose. Also, mom reports that student's relationship w/ step-father has been amicable. ~~mom reports that student's relationship w/ step-father has been amicable.~~ <sup>Step</sup> ~~father~~ ~~has~~ ~~been~~ ~~amicable.~~

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**WHEN THE RAPE MEETS THE MYTH**

- When an assault is like the myth, the victim's behaviors tend to be more like our expectations. However, the social supports and definition of victim and offender are highly influential and different.
  - Rape = stranger, violent, injuries, resistance
  - Reporting = faster, help-seeking, interest in law enforcement
  - Community = support 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 victim, defines self as raped

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**WHAT CRIMES INVITE COUNTERINTUITIVE BEHAVIOR?**

- Any crime can invoke a counterintuitive response on the part of the victim, but they are more likely in cases involving:
  - Junior and senior military personnel or an otherwise prohibited relationship or with status differential
  - Intimate partners
  - Intra-familial sexual assault or exploitation (children, family members)
  - Non-strangers (friends, co-workers, battle buddies, etc)

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**THE CONTEXT OF THE VICTIM**

- The victim' s context is defined:
  - The offender (influence on the truth, relationship, etc.)
  - The culture (barriers, disclosure, access to service, etc.)
  - The self (blame, prior history and experience)
  - The audience

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**WHAT INFLUENCES VICTIM RESPONSE?**

- Internal Factors
  - Culture, religion, gender issues
  - Socialization to aggression and sexuality
  - Feelings of shame, blame, embarrassment
  - Attribution of own responsibility for assault
  - Confusion about offense/offender
  - Previous history of abuse
  - Relationship with the offender
  - Fear of penalization for reporting or not being believed

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**WHAT INFLUENCES VICTIM RESPONSE?**

- External Factors
  - The access to services and support system
  - Fear of consequences to offender/community
  - Role of the offender in the community
  - Consequences of reporting
  - Education about sexual assault and reporting
- Influence of Offender
  - On the truth
  - On the community

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**OFFENDER’S INFLUENCE ON THE TRUTH**

- Offenders can manipulate the experience of the assault on the victim, influencing or changing the victim’s truth of the abuse:
  - Minimizing it
  - Not acting like a rapist or abuser
  - Using the victim’s sexual response against him/her
  - Using the victim’s confusion against him/her
  - Using the victim’s attachment/need
  - Using the victim’s past

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**OFFENDER’S INFLUENCE ON THE COMMUNITY**

- Offenders recognize that a victim’s social supports are critical to victim resilience, escape, and the offender being held accountable. They put effort into:
  - Isolating the victim
  - Discouraging victims from reporting abuse
  - Grooming the audience
  - “Proving” to the victim you can’t rely on the community/criminal justice system
  - Using third parties to influence victims
  - Manipulating the victim’s emotions
  - Threatening the victim

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**SHIFTING THE BURDEN**

- **Offenders are fabulous at shifting the focus and the weight of the offense onto the victim:**
  - What did the victim do to deserve it?
  - The embarrassment and shame
  - The burden of telling
  - Responsible for the consequences
  - The question of credibility
  - The question of motive

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**ISSUES OF VULNERABILITY**

- There is no vulnerability without danger.
- The predator defines the vulnerability.
- Intimate crimes/criminals create symptoms in the victims or use problems in the situation that they can use to destroy/diminish the victim's credibility!
- The "worse" the victim looks, the better it is for the offender.

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**NOT JUST VICTIMS!**  
\*DOWNLOAD AT [WWW.SAFEWOMENANDGIRLS.COM](http://WWW.SAFEWOMENANDGIRLS.COM)

**Sexual Assault Prevention Tips**

1. Don't put drugs in people's drinks in order to control their behavior.
2. When you see someone walking by themselves, leave them alone!
3. If you pull over to help someone with car problems, remember not to assault them!
4. NEVER open an unlocked door or window uninvited.
5. If you are in an elevator and someone else gets in, DON'T ASSAULT THEM!
6. USE THE BUDDY SYSTEM! If you are not able to stop yourself from assaulting people, ask a friend to stay with you while you are in public.
7. Always be honest! Don't pretend to

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**DELAYED REPORTING**

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



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**WHY?**

- The most blaming question in the world
  - Why didn't you tell
  - Why did you do \_\_\_\_\_ (drink, chat, sext)

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**VICTIMS AND SILENCE:  
WHY DON'T THEY TELL?**

There are several crucial differences between personal crimes and other crimes:

- Little or no physical evidence
- A suspect that doesn't fit the crime
- No witnesses or protection of witnesses
- Offenders deny well
- Victim is unsupported
- Disclosure is indirect
  - (R. Lessig, 1999, personal communication)
- Victim is penalized for the victimization

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**ASK: WHAT MADE YOU TELL?**

A great deal of information can be uncovered if we know what "triggered" the disclosure of the assault

- An escalation of the offender
- Fear of or knowledge of other victims
- Greater information of victim
- Increased social supports
- Medical issues (pregnancy, STDs)
- Forced disclosure
- Increase in symptoms of victim

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### CONTINUED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE OFFENDER

- Shock or disbelief
- Rush to normalization
- Relationship to offender
- Prior history of assault or abuse
- Attachment, love
- "Pretend Normal"
- Relief/Return to safety/Tension Free
- Resources
- Fear of leaving



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### WHY DOESN'T SHE LEAVE HIM ALONE?

- Complex process
- DANGER
- Attachment/Love
- Children
- Resources Limited
- Isolation
- Hope, promises
- Return to normal – for offender "Forgetting"



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### "LEAVING" DEFINED BY OFFENDER

- The change in the relationship is meaningful to the offender – that is what raises risk!
  - Getting papers
  - Getting a boyfriend
  - Custody
  - Moving
  - Changes in reactions to him/calls

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**RESISTANCE OR FIGHTING BACK**

- Not fighting or resisting in a clearly defined way
  - Fear, frozen, or terror
  - Disbelief that this is happening
  - Belief that it will be worse to fight
  - Socialization to passivity
  - Blamed/Primary Aggressor
  - Protection of others
  - Most victims do resist – How?



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**REALITY IS . . .**

- Physiologically, our limbic system tells us to survive by doing these things in this order –

FREEZE  
FLIGHT  
FIGHT

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**Good**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Good guys           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ Made a mistake</li> <li>▫ Are just being boys</li> <li>▫ "Separate the deed from the doer"</li> <li>▫ Show goodness through their "duty performance"</li> <li>▫ Can't be "real" rapists</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Good women           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ Are not sexual</li> <li>▫ Don't go out with strangers</li> <li>▫ Are able to control someone else's sexuality</li> <li>▫ Don't get raped</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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### TONIC IMMOBILITY?

- An involuntary “defensive strategy” seen in animals when unavoidable threat is perceived.
- Evidence it exists in humans.
- Sexual assault seems to elicit it more readily, though it can occur in other traumas
- Greater PTSD associated with elicitation (victims get it when exposed to triggers of past trauma)

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### REMEMBER

- Reality is – it is the perpetrator’s behavior that is “non-intuitive!”
  - Kindness follows violence
  - Professions of love
  - “Forgetting” or acting normal
  - Projections of blame
  - Redefining the truth
  - Giving control to victim
  - Guilt/distress or callousness over behavior

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### 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
- Having no trauma at all
- Not remembering after time passes after having vivid recall initially

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**INCONSISTENT, PIECEMEAL, CHANGING, OR INCOMPLETE MEMORIES**

- What appears inconsistent might just be normal or memories are retrieved or triggered
- Might be an interviewer issues
- Victims withhold or lie about elements because they
  - Fear blame or culpability
  - Are ashamed
  - Are trying to protect the listener or others
  - Are trying to protect self
  - Are triggered by the detail
- Trauma profoundly impacts how events are sequenced, encoded and recalled – often chaotic

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**RECANTATION**

- The most common inconsistency or lie of a victim is **RECANTATION**.
- Some studies indicate up to 80% of victims recant. (Meier, 2006)
- Recantation is associated with:
  - Financial dependence on offender;
  - Crime “not so bad” and doesn’t deserve jail;
  - Victim substance abuse;
  - Lack of victim support or access to advocates;
  - Poor perception or experience of criminal justice system;
  - Offender’s apology, influence or promised change

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**RECANTATION PROCESS**

BONOMI, A., GANGAMMA, R., LOCKE, C., KATAFIASZ, H., & MARTIN, D. (2011) "MEET ME AT THE HILL WHERE WE USED TO PARK": INTERPERSONAL PROCESSES ASSOCIATED WITH VICTIM RECANTATION. *SOCIAL SCIENCE & MEDICINE*, 73, 1054-1061

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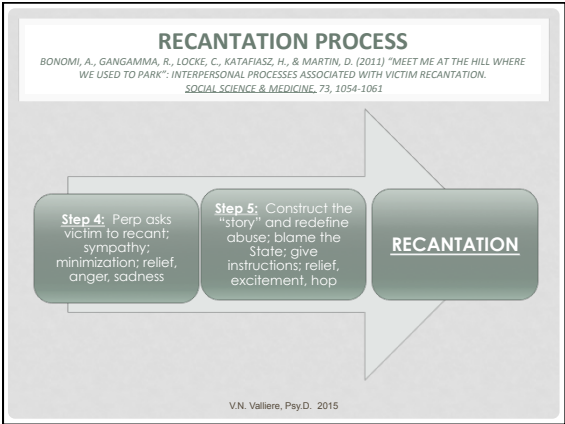
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**CHILDREN AND DISCLOSURE**

- Closer relationships = longer delay, more recantation
- Non-offending parent displays disbelief
- Recantation in up to 30% of true abuse cases
- Influence of perpetrator on children is profound
- Shame, blame, protection of the abuser, protection of the family, didn't want to upset someone

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**REMEMBER**

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**GET THE VICTIM' S COOPERATION**

- Ask them for "consent"
- Bribe them
- Give them special privileges
- Have them carry the secret
- Stimulate them/Pleasure them
- Confuse them
- Tell them they like it
- Tell them it means they love you
- Give them responsibility for your/family' s safety
- Make them feel stupid, ashamed
- Socialize them to the abuse
- Blackmail them

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**VICTIM PREPARATION - "GROOMING"**

- In offenders requiring a relationship for access
  - Exploit/Generate Trust
  - Create sympathy
  - Engage in "play"
  - Generate protection from victim/community
  - Isolate the victim
  - Make the victim feel special
  - Create wedges in relationships
  - Cloak the abuse

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**FACTORS IN VICTIM SELECTION FOR SEXUAL OFFENDERS**

- Vulnerability
  - Financial
  - Emotional
  - Social
  - Previously Victimized
  - Physical
- Access/Context
- Skill/Sophistication

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**TRAUMA**

- Is NOT a diagnosis and can have an impact without creating a diagnosis
- Unfolds over time
- Symptoms/expression of trauma changes with cognitive development
- Fluid, not static
- Might appear after abuse and not during
- Contact with offender or “obvious” things might not trigger trauma
- Can be created by the process of reporting/investigation
- The greatest mitigator is social support!

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**EFFECTS OF TRAUMA**

- Cognitive
  - Disorientation, confusion
  - Dissociation and depersonalization
  - Suppression and repression (defense mechanisms)
  - Denial
  - Concentration/Attention difficulties
  - Preoccupation with event/Nightmares/Flashbacks
  - Problematic judgment or poor decision-making

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**EFFECTS OF TRAUMA**

- Emotional
  - Crying, irritability, overreactivity
  - Hostility, anger, generalized rejection of others
  - Fatigue, inability to tolerate stress
  - Depression
  - Emotional numbing
  - Fear or free floating anxiety
  - Dependency/Avoidance

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**POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)**

- A diagnosis requiring a persistence of symptoms for more than 30 days.
- Need to experience a perceived threat to life or physical integrity combined with terror or helplessness.
- Written for disorders caused by sudden, unexpected events.
- Most intimate assault victims do not meet diagnosis.
- Does not take into account betrayal trauma.

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**SYMPTOMS RELATED TO PTSD**

- Hypervigilance
- Hyperarousal
- Avoidance of Stimuli
- Emotional Numbing/Detachment
- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Intrusive Memories/Thoughts
- Physical Reactions/Somatic Reactions
- Sleep/Appetite/Cognitive Disturbances

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**TRAUMA BONDING**

- The process by which the victim gets highly attached and bonded to the offender
  - Connection to the unpleasant
  - Idea/belief in responsibility for the crimes
  - Hope
  - Comfort from the abuser
  - Reliance on the abuser
    - Adapted from J. Hindman (1989) *Just Before Dawn*. Ontario: Oregon, Alexandria Associates.

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### TRAUMA BONDING: WHAT IS IT?

"When victims have a certain dysfunctional attachment that occurs in the presence of danger, shame, or exploitation" (Carnes, 1997, p. 29).

"A traumatic bond is created when pain is inflicted into the attachment. This bond is stronger than a non-traumatic bond. The more traumatic the bond, the harder to get out" (Anderson, 2009).

"The process by which the victim gets attached to trauma or the perpetrator of trauma" (Hindman, 1989).

"When person, male or female, has suffered harsh, painful treatment over an extended period of time, he or she naturally feels a flood of love and gratitude towards anyone who brings relief, like the surge of affection one might feel for the hand that offers a glass of water on a scorching day. But in the situation of abuse, the rescuer and the tormentor are the very same person" (Bancroft, 2002, p.220).

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### HOW IS IT CREATED?

- Love superceded by terror
- Relief and gratitude
- Comfort of the abusers
- Variable Reinforcement
- Shift in blame/Locus of control
- Changing perception of reality

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### TRAUMA BONDING

Factors that decrease likelihood of the bond developing:

- Being believed
- Clear identification of the perpetrator/victim
- Resilience
- Gender
- Cognitive Functioning
- Lack Of Guilt or Blame
- Family Functionality

(Berliner & Elliot, 1996)

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