

# Journal Club

18 June 02

Emotional Reactions of Rape  
Victim Advocates: A Multiple Case  
Study of Anger and Fear

Wasco, S.M., Campbell, R. (2002). Psychology of  
Women Quarterly, 26, 120-130

# Working With Rape Survivors

- ◆ Vicarious traumatization has been used to conceptualize the lasting impact of working with rape survivors
- ◆ Vicarious trauma defined:
  - “A transformation that occurs within a therapist after bearing witness to clients’ trauma experiences, which manifests psychologically via disrupted cognitive schema and intrusive imagery” (120)

# What the Studies Say

- ◆ Sexual assault counselors report:
  - Intrusive thoughts/memories
  - Increased arousal
  - Avoidance/numbness
  - Disruptions in basic cognitive schemas about trust in oneself and others and beliefs regarding safety
- ◆ Predictors of vicarious trauma:
  - Lack of experience with trauma victims
  - Caseloads make up of high percentages of sexual assault victims

# Some Other Studies Say

- ◆ Women reviewed archival data
  - Reported reactions that mirrored those of rape victims
    - ◆ Somatic complaints
    - ◆ Sleeping disorders
    - ◆ Increased cautiousness
    - ◆ Increased need for social support
    - ◆ Emotional responses (anger, anxiety, fear, sadness)

# The Relationship Among Rape, Anger, and Fear

- ◆ Anger and fear are the most common reactions to rape from advocates
- ◆ Counselors report anger as the most difficult aspect of the job
  - Anger as motivation in feminist activism
    - ◆ Depression and shame into anger
    - ◆ “Difficult stressor and valuable emotional resources” (121)

# Fear

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- ◆ “heightened fear of sexual assault” (121)
- ◆ As an adaptive role
  - “I don’t live in a fantasy world and I take active steps to reduce risk and vulnerability

# Current Study

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- ◆ Examine advocates experience with fear and anger

# Anger at the Individual Level

- ◆ 49.0% Criminal justice personnel
- ◆ 11.3% Perpetrators

# Anger at the Extra-Individual

## Level

- ◆ 38.7% Court system
- ◆ 18.3% Other system
- ◆ 15.0% Society's attitude
  - Social attitudes, politically conservative attitudes, patriarchal ideology
- ◆ 14.0% Brutality of rape

# Fear at the Individual Level

- ◆ 39.5% Perpetrators and their families
- ◆ 28.9% Client characteristics
- ◆ 15.7% Concern for others

# Fear at the Extra-Individual Level

- ◆ 26.0% Being alone on the job
- ◆ 20.0% Criminal justice system settings
- ◆ 12.2% Perception of risk in own life
- ◆ 10.0% Awareness of violence against women in general

# Conclusions

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- ◆ More anger than fear
- ◆ Limitations:
  - Interview style
  - Advocates used

# Implications

- ◆ Do visceral feelings of fear diminish over time?
- ◆ Do reactions shift from individual to extra-individual over time?
- ◆ Advocates are an understudied population

Questions?

