

# Impacts of sexual assaults



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We can all agree that sexual assault for the most part is a crime against women. I referred to sexual assault, and harassment in my original paper as the shielded crime. Shielded because as often as this occurs in the United States, many cases go unreported by women. There are three different approaches that I will examine as to why this is an ongoing problem. First, there is the 'family dysfunction approach'. This approach has its origin in the teaching of the famed psychologist, Sigmund Freud. Mr. Freud, often called the father of psychiatry, developed the Freudian theory. The Freudian theory states that you cannot ignore the family dynamics of how people conduct themselves. Pathologically, if a family has issues then those issues will permeate throughout the generations of the family. In the family dysfunctional theory, theorist uses this family framework to explain, incest, rape and sexual assault. In a dysfunctional family incest and sexual abuse is utilized to reduce tension and to maintain balance within the family. The balance includes making sure the family's bad deeds are kept primarily between family members (Hall and Hall 2011).

In the family dysfunctional approach, the mother is considered the chief cornerstone of the family. While, these insidious acts are taking place many family dysfunction theorists believe that the mother knows that these events are taking place but chooses to deny it even when her daughter tells her about the act. If it's not reported it becomes a shielded as well as a silent crime. If the cycle is not broken the insidiousness continues (Hall and Hall 2011).

Another approach is the psychological approach. As a female, I personal like this approach in that it focuses the underlining attention on the abuser

rather than the victim. So why do men feel the need to abuse a woman sexually? Psychologists are in when it comes to analyzing rape. However, the problem with rape as an act and as a crime is *sui generis*, but because of its unique features it cannot be labeled as just another crime. Even though the psychological approach studies the actions of the abusers, that approach has its flaws. Some questions to be asked are: are men going to tell you the real reason as to why they did the act? Was the man drunk or will they use drunk as a pretense for an excuse? And whether the man is truly remorseful?

There has been an alarming increase in sexual assault Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which cannot be treated effectively until the pathologies associated with rape trauma and its domains are well understood. There are numerous psychological effects that should be taken into consideration following a sexual assault such as shame, depression, or anxiety. The effect of these feelings can be stronger with support. If a victim feels unsupportive, or perceives a negative response is given, they have a greater risk of PTSD. Rape Trauma Syndrome has been characterized by three phases which are the Acute Phase, Outward Phase, and the final phase. The Acute phase is when the victim began experiences wide ranges of emotions which can be either be Expressive or Controlled emotions. The Outward Adjustments is when the victim goes into denial and tries to adjust to normal activities. The final phase can be characterized as Long Term Reorganization occurs when the victims determine their feelings about the assailant and how they see themselves (Chivers-Wilson 2006).

Looking at a sexual assault from a feminist approach fits this definition perfectly:

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a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanism by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared to men (Fernandez 2011 as cited in Amnesty International USA2005)

Throughout time society has supported laws and regulations that did not allow women to have the same rights as men. At one-point women were considered property; therefore, it was legal for a man to do whatever he decides to do to something he owned. This philosophy or thought process resulted in many women remaining in an undesired venomous position which poisoned and killed any hope of their escape (Fernandez 2011).

Fernandez continues to elaborate on his finding by pinpointing which social group or society demonstrated a higher sexual assault rate. His data indicates that the more dominate male society had a higher sexual assault rate. In a dominate male society, the man must show authority or supremacy over the woman. This superiority includes physical strength which leads to overpowering a woman during a sexual encounter. This thought process continues and feeds in to the belief that the victim is to blame rather than blaming culprit. This belief can be seen in the lack of support from the law (by way of punishment) and society including family members.

The “ Me 2 Movement” may have brought more public notice to sexual assault, but sexual assault has been a shielded crime for a number of years.

The plight of a dysfunctional family considered the actions as normal. If a child told someone and it was considered okay, then it was still okay when it happened to one of their children. The event was acceptable based on the victim's dysfunctional beliefs. The psychological effects on a sexual assault victim can be post-traumatic stress. Post-traumatic stress may result in the victim committing violence against themselves or others. The feminist point of view reveals how male dominance factors into society thought process as well as the implementing of punishment to the offender.

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