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Male Sexual Assault

Male victims of sexual assault are an often forgotten population--unseen, neglected, and underserved. The following information has been put together so that this population of victims can be better understood and supported.

Stereotypes and Myths

There are various stereotypes and myths that impact male victims' ability to face their sexual assault. These include:

- Men are immune to victimization.
- Men should be able to fight off attacks.
- Men shouldn't express emotion.
- Men enjoy all sex, so they must have enjoyed the assault.
- Male survivors are more likely to become sexual predators.

These stereotypes and myths can then lead to certain outcomes for male victims of sexual assault, including:

- Dramatic loss of self-esteem and belief in their masculinity
- Exaggerated self-blame
- Feelings of shame, guilt, anger
- Feelings of powerlessness, apprehension, withdrawal, and embarrassment
- Fears that they won't be able to protect and support their families
- Symptoms of Rape Trauma Syndrome
- Sexual difficulties
- Self-destructive behavior (drinking, drugs, aggression)

Barriers

Male victims of sexual assault also may experience certain barriers to seeking support or services, either from friends and family or from organizations and institutions.

Support

- It can be difficult for men to seek help for fear of how others will judge them.
- Responses from friends and family can be damaging or unsupportive.

Safety

- Threats to the victim of a sexual assault or his family may have been made by the perpetrator. This may cause him to keep silent.
- In institutions, he may be forced to keep silent through implied and real threats both by the perpetrator and/or by others within the institution.

Privacy

- He may resist reporting the sexual assault due to the need to repeat the story over and over again to police, to prosecutors, and in court.
- He may be unwilling to share details of the assault in order to protect his family from societal judgment.

Self-blame

- He may blame himself for the attack because he was not able to fight the aggressor off.
- He may think that the assault was not rape because he became sexually aroused during the attack (i.e., he had an erection or ejaculated — This is a normal physiological reaction, NOT a sign of enjoyment).

Outcomes

Male victims of sexual assault may experience a variety of outcomes that have an impact on their well-being.

Psychological

- Sense of self and concept of "reality" are disrupted
- Profound anxiety, depression, fearfulness, and identity confusion
- Development of phobias related to the assault setting
- Hypochondriacal symptoms (imaginary ailments)
- Paranoia and obsessive fear of bodily harm
- Withdrawal from interpersonal contact and a heightened sense of alienation
- Stress-induced psycho-physiological reactions
- Psychological outcomes can be severe for men because men are socialized to believe that they are immune to sexual assault and because societal reactions to these assaults can be more isolating and stigmatizing.

Heterosexual Men

- He may experience "homosexual panic"- a fear that the assault will make him "become homosexual."
- He may feel that he is less of a man.

Homosexual Men

- He may feel that he is being "punished" for his sexual orientation.
- He may fear that he was targeted as a member of the homosexual community. This fear

- may lead him to withdraw from that community.
- He may develop self-loathing related to his sexual orientation.

Relationships

- Relationships may be disrupted by the assault.
- Relationships may be disrupted by other's reactions to the assault such as a lack of belief/support.
- Relationships may also be disrupted by the victim's reactions to the assault.

Emotional

- Anger about the assault can lead to hostility.
 - Similarly, the overwhelming emotions that come with surviving a sexual assault can lead to emotional withdrawal.
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References

This section was adapted from materials provided by the [Texas Association Against Sexual Assault](#).