

Introduction

Sex. A three letter word that transmits giggles, shy smiles, uproarious laughter and alluring glances.

When the reaction is buried along with devastating stereotypes, the issue takes shape and becomes real.

This issue of Fathom goes beyond the stereotypes and giggles and looks at portions of society which are shoved aside and covered up with a facade.

Fathom takes a close look at rape, changing trends in adult magazines, singles' bars, topless dancers, gay social life, adult theaters and bookstores, massage parlors

and the availability of adult magazines in jails and libraries.

The subject is broad and touches many areas of society. For this reason, this issue will not attempt to judge or stereotype any portion of our society.

For each area to exist there need to be participants.

And when these participants come out from behind the wall, that segment of society emerges between the norm and themselves, the giggles cease and honesty begins.

Jill Denning

Rape emotionally scars victims

By Kim Wilt

The promise of a healthy, fulfilling sexual life can be thwarted, sometimes temporarily, sometimes permanently by the act of rape.

The victim can seek counseling in the offices of a psychologist, a minister or any number of rape crisis centers across the country, but ultimately it is up to her and the passing of time to decide how much emotional scar tissue will remain.

Jo Ann Dunn, Lincoln Rape Crisis Center coordinator, said in an interview that victims' reactions to rape vary widely.

"After they've been assaulted, a lot depends on the person, the reaction they get from their sexual partner, and the type of assault it was," she said.

"If the husband or boyfriend's reaction is negative—accusatory—if he feels she's violated or dirty, there will be trouble unless he receives counseling."

The Rape Crisis Center offers counseling to husbands and boyfriends, but not many take up the offer, Dunn said.

Some relationships simply cannot stand the strain of the sexual assault, she said, and about half have dissolved a year later.

The young woman was raped in Austin, Texas two years ago. The man she was seeing at the time is her husband now. "He said, 'I know I'll stay by you now. If it changes, I may not be able to.' And I did change. And he stuck by me."

Typical reactions to a rape include marital difficulties, an aversion to sex, or promiscuity, Dunn said. Victims could experience all, some or none of these. In addition, she said, victims go through the Rape Trauma Syndrome, a three-phase re-adjustment to the rape, identified by two women who have studied victims' reactions to sexual assault.

The first is the acute phase, where the victim experiences acute anxiety, guilt and shock. She may be uncertain as to the reactions of others around her, and could feel confused, angry out of control, and afraid. This phase lasts from a few days to a week.

She couldn't stay in the same apartment after the rape—a violent assault which began when she woke up to find the man on her bed choking her. The assault lasted 45 minutes, and when he left, she learned later, he thought she was dead.

"I had to talk to a psychiatrist. I had trouble sleeping—if I heard a noise, I assumed someone was in the house. I had to stay in the same apartment complex (the police requested her to) but I wouldn't go back into that apartment... I was afraid he'd come back."

She was his 14th victim.

The second phase, Dunn said, is the denial part.

"The victim doesn't want to talk about it, she puts it aside. She may have nightmares, and a change in eating or sleeping habits. She may feel depressed, or feel like she's crazy. A 'triggering event', like seeing the man or being in a similar situation, may bring her back to the feeling of the first phase."

This phase may last for a few months or for years, until the victim is able to deal with her feelings. Dunn said some women have never gotten past this phase.

The police took her to a hypnotist in an attempt to obtain information about the assault.

"I thought that was the most excellent way to do it. It was very relaxed... Before, I had a mental block—I couldn't think about it. The hypnotist led me step by step. The information they got eventually led to his capture... The line-up was the first experience I had in dealing with my anger. No one else (of the other victims) could identify him. (Afterwards), I went into the bathroom, and I just had uncontrollable anger. I kicked the toilet paper rack off. Before, it had all been inside me."

Integration is the third and final phase of the Rape Trauma Syndrome. Dunn said victims at this stage realize they need to integrate the rape into their lives, and accept the changes it has made in them. At this point, they are able to deal with their feelings, and accept their validity.

To get to the third phase, a victim must usually seek counseling somewhere. The Rape Crisis Center, with three paid staff members, and 30 volunteers who must attend 25 hours of training, has been in the counseling business since 1975.

Dunn said RCC counselors talk to victims about their feelings about the assault, and explain assertiveness and self-defense techniques.

"We help them to regain a certain amount of control—victims feel a definite loss of control in their lives," she said.

By being aware of potential rape situations, women can decrease the chances that they will be assaulted. Dunn said new studies have shown that rapists choose their victims by accessibility, not looks. A booklet published by the

RCC urges women to be aware of their surroundings, when they are out alone at night, whether on foot, or in a car.

Preventive measures include parking in a well-lit area, carrying car keys when walking to the car, and keeping the car windows rolled up, and the doors locked when driving. At home, doors and windows should be securely locked, and no stranger should be allowed inside, according to the booklet. If a rape occurs—"Think, don't panic. Always look for a way to escape."

"I struggled to get my finger under the cord he was choking me with, to get air. Then I decided to just freeze. It was the smartest thing I could have done... He raped me, and began strangling me again. I froze. I could feel him looking at me, then he went downstairs. I heard him in the kitchen, starting to go through drawers. I thought he was going to get a knife... I waited for about 20 minutes, then I stood up on my night stand and broke the window with my guitar... The sun was coming up by then. I felt real lucky that I got to see the sun come up."

Dunn said the amount of sexual problems a victim might have after an assault depends on how sexually well-adjusted she was before the assault, and what happened during the assault. Some victims have few problems, she said, while others take six months to a year or longer before they feel comfortable about having sex. Some victims feel comfortable around their husbands or boyfriends but are repulsed by the sight of other men.

If the victim was not involved with a man before the rape, Dunn said, he will have a fear of men, both those she does and does not know.

"It will be a long time before she gets involved in a relationship, especially a sexual one," she said.

"Most people, like men, think, 'Oh, well, she's been screwed before, it's just another lay. It's degrading, that's a good word for it... If guys whistled, or winked at me, I'd get upset. I'd tell somebody to fuck off if they just said 'hi.' I was a virgin before I got raped... We waited (to have sex) until after we got married. The rape bothered (her husband) more than it did me... Such a long time elapsed between the rape and the first time I had sex. I was determined not to let it screw me up."

Denise Daup, RCC volunteer coordinator, who is doing field placement training for a Master's degree in counseling at the Women's Resource Center said students can face special problems.

"For many, it's their first time away from home, and the first time they've had to deal with their sexuality," Daup said.

Students are more vulnerable to rape, she said, because night classes require them to be on campus late. Also, she said, they live in apartments and, "who knows who has all the keys to those apartments."

"Many students come from small towns where rape isn't a reality. They don't lock their house or car, they have trust."

Another concern students have is how or whether to tell their parents, she said. Most are from out-of-town and don't have the same support they would have if they were at home, she added.

"It's an added stress to an already stressful life. It could cause them to miss classes, to interrupt their studies."

"It affected my concentration for a year. My average went from a 3.8 to a 2.8."

"Sometimes I just have this desire to go see him in prison, to tell him how he screwed up my life."

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