

City University of New York (CUNY)

CUNY Academic Works

Student Theses

John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Spring 5-26-2017

Victim-Offender Relationships in Sexual Assault and Subsequent Disclosure and Reporting Styles

Amy R. Ramapuram

CUNY John Jay College, amy.ramapuram@gmail.com

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

More information about this work at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/jj_etds/34

Discover additional works at: <https://academicworks.cuny.edu>

This work is made publicly available by the City University of New York (CUNY).

Contact: AcademicWorks@cuny.edu

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

Victim-Offender Relationships in Sexual Assault and Subsequent Disclosure and
Reporting Styles

Amy Ramapuram

John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

Abstract

There is a discrepancy between the number of perpetrated sexual assaults and the number of reported sexual assaults. Past research has shown that one factor that could contribute to this discrepancy in reporting and disclosure of sexual assaults is the victim-offender relationship. Furthermore, there is evidence that victims of sexual assault minimize when describing their offense and their offender, which could further impact reporting and disclosure. The current study seeks to look into whether the victim-offender relationship influences the disclosure, reporting, and use of minimization, in reference to sexual assault. The victim-offender relationships that were analyzed were “stranger”, “friend/acquaintance”, “partner”, and “familial”. Findings showed no significant differences among these victim-offender relationships in disclosure, reporting, or use of minimization. The results were further analyzed through looking at the frequencies in each of the victim-offender categories, in relation to the three dependent variables, in which observed differences were discussed.

Introduction

Sexual assault is a prevalent problem in our society. One in five women, and one in 71 men will be raped at some point in their lives, while one in five girls, and one in 20 boys are sexually abused before the age of 18 (“Statistics about sexual violence,” 2015; “Child Sexual Abuse Statistics,” 2012).

While it is often believed that those who commit sex offenses are strangers (Anderson, 2007), the reality is that three out of four adolescents who have been sexually assaulted were assaulted by someone known to them, and in eight out of 10 cases of rape, the victim knew their perpetrator. (“Child Sexual Abuse statistics,” 2012; “Statistics

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING about sexual violence,” 2015).

Specifically, of the sexual assaults that took place between the years 2005 and 2010 – and were reported to the authorities – only 22% of the assaults were perpetrated by a stranger, while 78% were perpetrated by someone known to the victim (Planty, Langton, Krebs , Berzofsky & Smiley-McDonald, 2013). Further breaking down the 78% of assault perpetrated by a known-offender, 34% were perpetrated by an intimate partner, 6% by a family member, and 38% by an acquaintance (Planty, Langton, Krebs , Berzofsky & Smiley-McDonald, 2013).

However, it is believed that the official statistics represent only a small fraction of the sexual assaults that actually take place, and it was estimated that between 2009 and 2010 only about one third (32%) of sexual assaults against females were reported to the police, with 64% of these being reported by the victim herself. Meanwhile, 10% of these reported sexual assaults were reported by another household member (Planty, Langton, Krebs , Berzofsky & Smiley-McDonald, 2013). These numbers are further supported by The Bureau of Justice, which has found that between the years of 1992 and 2000, out of 131,950 completed rapes, 83,700 (63%) were not reported to the police. Furthermore, out of 98,970 attempted rapes, 64,600 (65%) were not reported to the police, and out of 135,550 sexual assaults, 99,840 (74%) were not reported to the police (Rennison, 2002). According to Planty, Langton, Krebs , Berzofsky and Smiley-McDonald (2013), the most common reason given for not reporting the offense was fear of reprisal (20%). Other reasons for not reporting the offense included “reported to different official” (8%), “personal matter” (13%) “not important enough to respondent” (8%), “police could not do anything to help” (2%), “police would not do anything to help” (13%), “did not want

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING
to get offender in trouble with law (7%), and “advised not to report” (percentage not available) (p. 7).

A study investigating the prevalence of sexual assaults at a Level 1 trauma center found that the annual incidence of rape cases that were seen at the emergency department increased by 60%, comparing the rates for the year of 1974 and the rates for the year of 1991 (Magid et al., 2004). While Magid et al. (2004) found that the incidence rates of reported stranger assaults remained the same between the two time periods (about 7 per 10,000 for both years), the rates of reported assaults by a known perpetrator had increased from 4.1 per 10,000 reported assaults in 1974, to 10.6 per 10,000 reported assaults in 1991. The study further noted that the number of perpetrated acquaintance rapes nationally did not significantly vary between 1974 and 1991. This indicated that the increase seen in reported, known-offender assaults solely came from an increase in the reporting, rather than an overall increase in perpetrated known-offender assaults (Magid et al., 2004). Evidence for this discrepancy in reporting and disclosure was also reported by Koss, Dinero, Siebel, and Cox (1988), who found that victims of stranger rape were more likely to discuss their assault with someone, to seek out crisis services, and report the offense to the authorities, than were victims of acquaintance rape.

The disparity between the number of sexual offenses that occur and those that are reported exemplify the fact that there are barriers to reporting. However, it is unclear what factors influence victims’ decisions to report these crimes to the authorities. Reporting and disclosing sexual offenses is important to providing support and treatment for victims, as well as for the prosecution of those who commit sexual violence, in order to prevent reoffending. It is therefore imperative to study the factors that influence the

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

reporting and disclosure of sexual offenses, such as characteristics of the assault itself, the victim's perceptions of the perpetrator, the victim's perceptions of the offense, as well as the use of minimization when addressing the offense.

The Victim-Offender Relationship: Factors to Consider in Reporting and Disclosing

The characteristics of the assault – including weapon use, victim injury, perceived life threat, and the severity of the assault – influence the likelihood of reporting the offense (Chen & Ullman, 2010). These sexual assault characteristics are further influenced by the victim-offender relationship. Woods and Porter (2008) examined the characteristics of assaults perpetrated by stranger offenders versus non-stranger offenders. Through this study, the researchers were able to put sexual assault into four different categories, dependent on the characteristics of the assault. These categories included a “dominant” style of offending, a “submissive” style of offending, “hostile interactions”, and “cooperative interactions”. When a “dominant” style was utilized, the offender maintained control over the victim, and used force and/or a weapon during the attack. When a “submissive” style was utilized, the perpetrator gave the victim a sense of control over the attack. Sexual assaults furthermore incorporated “hostile interactions” and “cooperative interactions”. When perpetrators applied “hostile interactions” in an attack, their behaviors involved overly violent actions, which were superfluous to the commission of the crime. Contrastingly, when perpetrators applied “cooperative interactions” within an assault, they forced the victim to participate in the act. Stranger assaults were more likely to use “dominant” offending tactics, and “hostile interactions”, often resulting in a blitz-style attack. Comparatively, sexual assaults that involved a known offender were often less violent, using strategies that create the illusion that the

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

victim is cooperative in the sexual assault, using romantic gestures and affectionate behaviors towards the victim. Thus, it was found that known offenders often engage in “submissive” offending, utilizing “cooperative interactions.” Similarly, Koss, Dinero, Seibel, and Cox (1988) found that victims’ reports of stranger assaults tended to be more violent than reports of acquaintance assaults. Woods and Porter (2008) theorized that perhaps known offenders engaged in less violent behaviors because they wanted to create the illusion that the victim was compliant, creating the impression of a pseudo-relationship in the eyes of the offender. They further theorized that because victims were given this sense of control during the attack, victims of known assailants might have engaged in more self-blame.

A prior sexual relationship between a victim and their perpetrator could also influence the features of a sexual assault. Wenger, Pierce, and Abbey (2014) found that perpetrators who had sexual precedence with their victims usually took a more dominant, aggressive role in the assault, expecting to have sex with the victim because there was a sexual history. Further, Stermac, Du Mont, and Dunn (1998) found that assaults perpetrated by past or present boyfriends and husbands tended to be more violent and coercive, and reflective of stranger assaults in their severity. Perpetrators who had sexual precedence with their victims, and were in committed relationships with their victims, would often use tactics such as sulking, making their victims feel guilty, swearing, getting angry, and threatening to end their relationship (Wenger, Pierce, & Abbey, 2014). Contrastingly, perpetrators in casual relationships with their victims, who did not have sexual precedence, were more likely to use the tactic of making their victims vulnerable, such as through intoxication (Wenger, Pierce, & Abbey, 2014). Furthermore, casual

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

relationship perpetrators were less likely to have planned to have sex with their victims, tried harder to get their victims alone, drank more alcohol, and were often with a victim who also drank more alcohol, as compared with the characteristics seen in committed relationship assaults. This research shows that the victim-offender relationship significantly influences the characteristics of the assault, characteristics, which in turn have also been shown to affect reporting.

The victim-offender relationship also influences the perceptions that victims have of their assault. Edwards, Kearns, Gidycz, and Calhoun (2012) examined factors that may influence the decision of the victim to continue a relationship after the occurrence of a sexual assault, and found that factors such as self-blame, perpetrator blame, severity of the assault, victim-perpetrator relationship, and previous consensual sex with the perpetrator increased the likelihood that a woman would continue to engage in a relationship with the perpetrator of the abuse. They also found that the women who had been casually dating their perpetrators before the assault were least likely to continue their relationships, while women who were in steady relationships with their offenders were mostly likely to continue their relationships, and those who were friends with their perpetrators fell somewhere in the middle. Thus, the stronger the relationship between the victim and the offender, the more likely the victim was to continue her relationship with the offender. This could be an issue when considering the continuation of violence in an ongoing relationship with someone who has been abusive. Furthermore, this could prevent the victim from reporting or disclosing their assault, in that to report or disclose the violence could effectively end the relationship, or change the dynamic of the relationship. It has further been found that victims of stranger assaults see their

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

perpetrators as more responsible, in comparison to those who have been assaulted by an acquaintance, which could be reflective of the familiarity that the victim has with her perpetrator (Koss, Dinero, Seibel, & Cox, 1988). Edwards, Kearns, Gidyez, and Calhoun (2012) did find, however, that victims tended to end relationships with their perpetrators if the victims expressed more perpetrator-blame, or when the assaults were more violent.

The relationship between the victim and the perpetrator can also influence the victim's perception of the criminality of sexual assault. Clare and Morgan (2009) found that there was a lower likelihood for victims who were involved in an ongoing relationship with their perpetrators to perceive the offense as criminal. More specifically, the results suggested that females perceived assaults by current partners and known non-partners as less-criminal in nature. However, this finding did not extend to violence involving ex-partners. It should be noted that while partner and ex-partner relationships are important victim-offender relationships to consider, the category of "known non-partner" is broad, and could include a variety of relationships, including familial relationships, friendships, or acquaintanceships, that are marked by dissimilar characteristics.

Minimization

The minimization of a sexual assault is related to the reporting of the assault as well, seeing that victims who perceive the assault as less serious are less likely to report the incident (Walsh & Bruce, 2014). Research has found that women who do not label their sexual assault as an assault or abuse often minimize, saying that the assault was "not a big deal", stating that they were not greatly harmed by the incident, or saying that what happened was typical dating behavior (Harned, 2005). The Harned (2005) study further

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

referred to the possibility that victims using minimization are individuals who want to avoid the social and personal consequences of labeling the event as sexual assault or sexual abuse. One of these personal consequences could be the end of the romantic relationship between the victim and her offender. Gilbert and Gordon (2017) found that within situations of interpersonal violence, commitment to the relationship and victims' forgiveness of abuse is explained through victims' minimization of the severity of the aggression. The researchers theorized that victims of interpersonal violence may feel conflict in consideration to their relationship, because of their commitment to their offender, and in order to cope with this distress, victims minimize or deny the impact of the violence. Another study investigating tactics that perpetrators use in sexual assault, as well as victims' responses to the assault, found that several victims in their sample used minimization (Edwards et al, 2014). The researchers theorized that minimization was endorsed because many of the victims in the sample were still in a relationship with their perpetrators. Furthermore, minimization was found to be a coping strategy in response to rape (Meyer & Taylor, 1986). It was also found that use of rape minimization seems to be somewhat dependent on the victim-offender relationship, at least in consideration to third-party classifications. Yamawaki and Tschanz (2005) performed a study in which they found that their sample of college students used the least amount of minimization in reference to cases of stranger rape, greater use of minimization in reference to date rape, and the most use of minimization in reference to marital rape.

Current Study

There is evidence that victims of sexual assault sometimes minimize their offenses, and that to a degree, past research has found that the victim-offender

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

relationship influences the minimization of an unwanted sexual experience. There is also evidence that the victim-offender relationship influences the reporting and disclosure of sexual assault, as well as the perception of the assault itself. However, past research has mainly focused on victim-offender relationships such as stranger versus non-stranger assaults, or specifically sexual assaults in romantic partnerships. The current study further examines the association between the victim-offender relationship and 1) use of minimization, 2) the decision to disclose the event to a confidant, and 3) the decision to report the assault to the authorities. Based upon the research to date, it is hypothesized that the closer the victim-offender relationship, the less likely it will be for the victim to disclose the offense to a confidant. Second, it is hypothesized that the closer the victim-offender relationship, the less likely it will be for the victim to report the offense to the authorities. Thirdly, it is hypothesized that the closer the victim-offender relationship, the more likely it will be for the victim to utilize minimization in response to the perpetrator and the offense.

Methods

Procedures

The participants for the current study were obtained through the recruitment of students attending John Jay College of Criminal Justice to participate in a larger study, examining how victims perceive sex crimes and sex offender legislation (Colombino, 2017). The current study is a secondary analysis of data collected as part of the Colombino (2017) study, otherwise known as the “Victims Project”. Part I of the “Victims Project” consisted of an online survey that examined the differences in the attachment with parents and guardians for those who had experienced an unwanted

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

sexual encounter before the age of 18, versus those who had not experienced an unwanted sexual encounter before the age of 18. This survey was also used to screen for part II of the study. Those who reported to have had experienced an unwanted sexual encounter before the age of 18 were interviewed about their experiences. Out of the 2,000 participants involved in part I of the study, 162 (8.1%) participants indicated that they had had an unwanted sexual experience before the age of 18. After reaching out to those who would be eligible to participate in part II of the study, 79 (48.8%) participants volunteered to complete interviews. The current study utilizes data from the transcripts of 75 of the interviews from part II. The cases that were excluded had missing pertinent information relating to one or more of the four variables used in this study ($n=4$). Participants were on average 21.0 years at the time of participation ($SD = 4.46$). The average age at the time of victimization extended from 4 to 17 ($M = 10.5$, $SD = 4.2$). Victim participants were Latino (63.3%; $n = 50$), White (19.0%; $n = 15$), African American (15.2%; $n = 12$), or Pacific Islander (2.5%; $n = 2$) (Colombino, 2017).

Participants completed a semi-structured interview with a trained MA level research assistant, which included topics pertaining to the perpetrator of the offense, the space in which the offense occurred, the repercussions (if any) that resulted from the incident, and the victims' opinions and perceptions of current sex offender legislation. All interviews were audio recorded with the participants' permission, and transcribed. All participants were debriefed at the conclusion of the interview, and provided with a list of resources, should the participant become distressed at the conclusion of the interview. All MA level research assistants received training in suicide risk assessment. Furthermore, a licensed clinical psychologist was available, should a participant have

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

endorsed suicidal ideation and intent. The current study then used the data obtained from the transcribed interviews to analyze whether there is a link between the victim-offender relationship and the reporting, disclosure, and/or minimization of a sexual offense.

Measures

The “Victims Project” part II questionnaire consisted of forced choice questions, as well as open response questions. For the current study, we used data pertaining to the victim-offender relationship, whether the offense was disclosed and/or reported, and whether minimization was utilized when the participant would respond to questions that asked for further clarification as to why they decided to either report or not report the offense, and what they think should have happened to their perpetrator.

Victim-offender relationship.

The victim-offender relationship was determined through the classification offered by the participant. In the current study, the categories that each relationship were placed into consisted of “familial”, “partner”, “friend”, “acquaintance”, and “stranger”. If the victim gave a description that did not specifically mention one of these categories, that participant was placed into a category that most accurately portrayed the relationship that they described.

Disclosure.

Disclosure was determined using the question “Did you tell anyone that you were being sexually abused?” to which the participant could either respond “yes” or “no”.

Reporting.

The victim was determined to have either reported or to have not reported the offense based on their response to the question: “Did you go directly to the

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING
 police/authorities? Explain why/why not.” This question involved a “yes” or “no”

answer, as well as further clarification about their response.

Minimization.

Four questions were utilized to assess whether minimization was used. These four questions were: “Did you go directly to the police/authorities? Explain why/why not”, “Why did you decide not to report the incident/s to an authority figure?”, “What do you think should have happened to [the perpetrator]?”, and “If it was completely up to you, what do you wish had happened to [the perpetrator]?”. Based on the participants’ responses to these questions, the researchers gave an overall classification of “Yes” or “No”, as to whether the victim was using minimization. This coding was done regardless of whether the victims endorsed having reported or disclosed the offense or not. In other words, the reporting and/or disclosure of the offense did not influence the coding for minimization. The criteria that were used to determine if a victim was minimizing came from past literature on minimization used in relation to victims who were subjected to sexual assault in a romantic partnership (Harned, 2005). In this study, Harned (2005) classified a victim’s responses as using minimization based on the following criteria, separated dependent on whether the assault was labeled as an assault by the victim, or given an alternate label by the victim (see Table 1):

Table 1

Classification of Minimization (Harned, 2005)

Not labeling the assault

It was no big deal

No serious harm was done

Alternate labeling the assault

A misunderstanding

A mistake

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

Typical boy-girl relations

Annoying

Male sex drive

Normal sex

In order to apply these criteria to the current study, the following conditions were employed in classifying a participant as either using minimization, or not using minimization (see Table 2):

Table 2

<i>Current Classification of Minimization</i>	
<u>Inclusion criteria for use of minimization</u>	<u>Notes on inclusion criteria</u>
The victim does not label the assault as an assault	
The victim in some form implies that the offense “was no big deal”	When the victim uses phrases such as “it wasn’t worth it” or “they couldn’t do anything”, in response to the question “Did you go directly to the police/authorities? Explain why/why not”, this has the implication of the crime not having enough worth to report, or to make a difference whether it went reported or not
The victim makes a statement to the effect that “no serious harm was done” as a result of the offense	
The victim relates that the crime was “typical boy-girl behavior”	
The victim states that the offense was a “misunderstanding” or a “mistake”	
The victim takes blame away from the perpetrator	This can be done by excusing the behavior for reasons such as mental defect, difficult life-situations, saying the perpetrator was also abused, or placing blame on

Coding

In order to achieve inter-rater reliability, the researcher enlisted two independent raters to re-rate 15 cases (20%), in relation to the use of minimization. Within each case, each rater was provided at least four statements offered by the participant, in response to the questions utilized to determine whether or not they were minimizing. Each rater was separately trained in determining minimization, through a detailed explanation of what the inclusion criteria were for labeling a statement as minimizing. This would include providing the criteria, as well as any notes or clarification that the researcher thought was important to mention, in order for the rater to fully understand that criterion. Examples of these notes can be found in Table 2.

All of the raters had to reach agreement on at least 80% of the cases provided, which was determined through Cohen's Kappa. If the inter-rater reliability was not achieved on the first attempt, the raters would be retrained, and rate the cases again.

Results

The three dependent variables in this study were disclosure, reporting, and minimization. The independent variable that was analyzed was the victim-offender relationship. Each of the dependent variables were analyzed in association with the victim-offender relationship through a chi-square test. Originally, the categories for victim-offender relationship included "friend" and "acquaintance" separately, however, due to the small *n* of both the "friend" and "acquaintance" categories, these two groupings were combined during the analysis. Therefore, out of the 75 cases that were

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING
 analyzed, the victim-offender categories were broken into stranger ($n=2$),
 friend/acquaintance ($n=33$), partner ($n=12$), and familial ($n=28$).

The Victim-Offender Relationship and Disclosure

First, disclosure was analyzed among the four victim-offender relationships. The frequencies associated with participant disclosure, according to victim-offender relationship, can be found in Table 3. A chi-square test was performed to find if there was an association between the victim-offender relationship and disclosure of the offense to a confidant. The relationship between these two variables was not significant, $\chi^2 (3, N = 75) = 2.59, p = .46$.

The Victim-Offender Relationship and Reporting

Next, reporting was analyzed in relation to the victim-offender relationship. Frequencies per victim-offender relationship can be found in Table 4. A chi-square test was performed to analyze whether there were differences among the victim-offender relationships when reporting the offense to the authorities. The relationship between these two variables was not significant, $\chi^2 (6, N = 75) = 5.66, p = .46$.

The Victim-Offender Relationship and Minimization

The last association that was tested was between victim-offender relationship and the minimization variable. Frequencies for this relationship can be found in Table 5. The relationship between these two variables was also analyzed through a chi-square test. No significant differences were found among the victim-offender relationships in the utilization of minimization, $\chi^2 (6, N = 75) = 10.94, p = .09$

Discussion

This study examined whether there was a relationship between the victim-

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

offender relationship in sexual offenses and disclosure of the sexual offense by the victim, reporting of the offense by the victim, and whether or not the victim used minimization when describing the offense and/or their perpetrator.

Overall we found no significant differences in disclosure, reporting, or minimization among the different victim-offender relationships.

Contrary to our hypothesis, we found no differences among the victim-offender relationships for disclosure of the offense. Past research has found differences in victim disclosure between stranger-offenders and known-offenders in sexual assault (Koss, Dinero, Seibel, & Cox, 1988). However, not many studies have looked further into disclosure, considering different types of victim-offender relationships within the broad category of known-offenders in sexual assault. While no statistically significant differences were found between type of victim-offender relationship and disclosure in the current study, the “partner” category was the only victim-offender relationship in which fewer participants disclosed the offense. Rather, more of the victims of sexual assaults in romantic relationships chose not to tell a confidant about the offense. Contrastingly, more participants in both the “friend/acquaintance” group and the “familial” group reported that they had disclosed the offense to someone else (see figure 1). This could reflect that victims of sexual assault within romantic relationships are less likely to tell others of the abuse. Perhaps one reason for this result is the victim wanting to continue a relationship with their offender, even after the occurrence of abuse, and by not disclosing the abuse, they would not be pressured to end the relationship.

Similarly we found no differences among the victim-offender relationships when examining whether or not the victim reported the offense to the authorities. Though past

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

studies have found differences in reporting among different victim-offender relationships, most of these studies, again, only focused on stranger-offenders versus known-offenders in sexual assaults (Koss, Dinero, Seibel, & Cox, 1988; Magid et al., 2004). The current study's analysis showed similar frequencies among the victim-offender relationships, when looking at the number of participants in each category who endorsed either reporting or not reporting the offense. Of note was that while the majority of those who were victimized by a "friend/acquaintance" or "family member" did not report the offense, there were still a number of participants in these categories that did report the offense. However, none of the participants in the "partner" victim-offender category reported the offense (see figure 2). Previous studies have found that victims in steady relationships with their perpetrators are more likely to continue their relationship with their offender after the offense, and are less likely to see the offense as criminal (Edwards, Kearns, Gidyez, & Calhoun, 2012; Clare & Morgan, 2009). This trend of non-reporting in the "partner" category in the current study is consistent with these past research findings.

Lastly, among our sample, no differences were found among the victim-offender relationships and participants' use of minimization. This finding contrasts with the findings of previous studies, which have found differences in some victim-offender relationships in the minimization of the offense (Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005). The Yamawaki and Tschanz (2005) study looked at other's minimization of the offense, however, and not minimization used specifically by the victim. Furthermore, while the current study looked at "stranger", "friend/acquaintance", "partner", and "familial" as victim-offender relationships, Yamawaki and Taschanz (2005) used "stranger", "date

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

rape”, and “marital” in their analysis. However, interestingly those in the current study who were victimized by a “partner” proportionally used more minimization than those in the other victim-offender relationship types (see figure 3), which could indicate that victims of sexual assaults perpetrated by a partner may be more likely to minimize the event and/or their perpetrator’s responsibility. Again, this could be to protect their perpetrator, or possibly resolve the internal conflict that victims perhaps experience, which Gilbert and Gordon (2017) refer to in their study. This internal conflict in continuing a relationship with their perpetrator is theorized to resolve when victims minimize the offense.

This study is not without limitations. While the interview format enabled us to get more nuanced information with regard to minimization, the format limited the sample size. Consequently, the groups were not evenly distributed, and some groups only had a few participants, the stranger category only having two participants. Thus, while there may in fact be differences related to the relationship between the victim and offender – it is possible that we were not able to detect these differences. Future studies perhaps using survey methodology could be utilized to test these hypotheses with larger samples. The sample also provided a limitation in that the data available was dependent on the individuals who were open to disclosing their offense to the researchers. Based on the findings of past research, this study could be missing a huge portion of people who have been sexually assaulted, but do not want to come forward with that offense.

Another possible limitation was that though the minimization criteria were mainly gathered from a previous study (Harned, 2005), there is the possibility that these inclusion criteria did not adequately capture when the victim was minimizing the offense,

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

or their perpetrator's accountability in the offense. Furthermore, though most of the criteria were adapted from a previous study, the criteria were slightly altered to fit the sample that was used in the current study. The Harned (2005) study used participants who were specifically victims of sexual offenses perpetrated by a partner, whereas there were other victim-offender relationships included in the current study. Although much of the minimization offered through Harned (2005) applied to the sort of minimization that was seen in the current study, it is possible that there were additional strategies used by the participants in the current study, considering there were additional victim-offender relationships that were examined.

The clinical implications of these findings suggest that victims who have experienced a sexual assault by their partner seem to potentially be most hesitant in disclosing and reporting the offense. The partner relationship furthermore seems the most likely to produce victims who will minimize sexual assault within the relationship. Therefore, consideration must be taken to rectify how victims in sexually abusive partnerships perceive sexual assault, and how they perceive their offender, so that the abuse does not continue. Furthermore, clinicians should find ways to make victims comfortable in disclosing the offense, which could be a stepping-stone towards eventually reporting the offense. However, it should be noted that some victims believe that their best option is to not pursue a report or legal action against their offender, and solely want the abuse to end. This should also be taken into consideration, and respected.

Continued research into the victim-offender relationship, and how this is related to disclosure and reporting is warranted. In addition, stereotypes of sexual assaults must be debunked. While the majority of people believe that rapes are committed by strangers

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

(Anderson, 2007) – this is not the case, and thus makes it difficult for victims to come forth if their sexual assault does not match that stereotype. Social factors could also influence reporting and disclosure. Victims may consider the possibility of not being believed by the authorities, or may be dissuaded by the idea of having to convince someone that the assault had taken place. Furthermore, unwanted questions that imply victim-responsibility, such as “what were you wearing at the time of the incident”, may deter victims from following through with a report. Research should look into the procedures taken by the police, and how these either welcome or dissuade victims from reporting a sexual assault. Influences on the prosecution of sexual offenses should also be investigated, in relation to the victim-offender relationship. Things to consider when looking at the victim-offender relationship could be the rate at which prosecutors take on sexual offense cases, the probability of a guilty verdict, and the subsequent trends in the sentencing of offenders.

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

References

- Anderson, I. (2007). What is a typical rape? Effects of victim and participant gender in female and male rape perception. *Journal of Social Psychology, 46*(1), 225-245.
- Chen, Y., & Ullman, S. E. (2010). Women's reporting of sexual and physical assaults to police in the National Violence Against Women Survey. *Violence Against Women, 16*(3), 262-279. doi:10.1177/1077801209360861
- Child sexual abuse statistics. (2012). *The National Center for Victims of Crime*. Retrieved from <https://victimsofcrime.org/media/reporting-on-child-sexual-abuse/child-sexual-abuse-statistics>
- Clare, J., & Morgan, F. (2009). Factors affecting perceived criminality: Evidence from victims of assault. *Woden: Australian Institute of Criminology*. Retrieved <http://ez.lib.jjay.cuny.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1845804?accountid=11724>
- Colombino, N. (2017). Preventing sexual violence where it most often occurs: An investigation of the situational and structural components of child sexual abuse in residential settings. *Graduate Center, City University of New York*.
- Edwards, K. M., Kearns, M. C., Gidycz, C. A., & Calhoun, K. S. (2012). Predictors of victim-perpetrator relationship stability following a sexual assault: A brief report. *Violence and Victims, 27*(1), 25-32. Retrieved from <http://ez.lib.jjay.cuny.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/92133254?accountid=11724>
- Edwards, K. M., Probst, D. R., Tansill, E. C., Dixon, K. J., Bennett, S., & Gidycz, C. A. (2014). In their own words: A content-analytic study of college women's resistance to sexual assault. *Journal Of Interpersonal Violence, 29*(14), 2527-2547. doi:10.1177/0886260513520470
- Gilbert, S. E., & Gordon, K. C. (2017). Predicting forgiveness in women experiencing intimate partner violence. *Violence Against Women, 23*(4), 452-468. doi:10.1177/1077801216644071
- Koss, M., Dinero, T., Seibel, C., & Cox, S. (1988). Stranger and acquaintance rape. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 12*(1), 1-24.
- Harned, M. S. (2005). Understanding Women's Labeling of Unwanted Sexual Experiences With Dating Partners. *Violence Against Women, 11*(3), 374-413. doi:10.1177/1077801204272240
- Magid, D. J., Houry, D., Koepsell, T. D., Ziller, A., Soules, M. R., & Jenny, C. (2004).

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING

- The epidemiology of female rape victims who seek immediate medical care: Temporal trends in the incidence of sexual assault and acquaintance rape. *Journal Of Interpersonal Violence*, 19(1), 3-12. doi:10.1177/0886260503259046
- Meyer, C. B., & Taylor, S. E. (1986). Adjustment to rape. *Journal Of Personality And Social Psychology*, 50(6), 1226-1234. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.50.6.1226
- Planty, M., Langton, L., Krebs, C., Berzofsky, M., Smiley-McDonald, H. (2013). Female victims of sexual violence, 1994-2010. *U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics*. Retrieved from <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/fvsv9410.pdf>
- Rennison, C. M. (2002). Rape and sexual assault: Reporting to police and medical attention, 1992-2000. *U.S. Department of Justice*.
- Statistics about sexual violence. (2015). *National Sexual Violence Resource Center*. Retrieved from http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_factsheet_media_packet_statistics-about-sexual-violence_0.pdf
- Stermac, L., & Dunn, S. (1998). Violence in known-assailant sexual assaults. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 13(3), 398-412.
- Walsh, R., Bruce, S., Gold, Steven N., & Kendall-Tackett, Kathleen. (2014). Reporting Decisions After Sexual Assault: The Impact of Mental Health Variables. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 6(6), 691-699.
- Wenger, R., Pierce, J., & Abbey, A. (2014). Relationship type and sexual precedence: Their associations with characteristics of sexual assault perpetrators and incidents. *Violence against Women*, 20(11), 1360-82.
- Woods, L., & Porter, L. (2008). Examining the relationship between sexual offenders and their victims: Interpersonal differences between stranger and non stranger sexual offences. *Journal Of Sexual Aggression*, 14(1), 61-75. doi:10.1080/13552600802056640
- Yamawaki, N., & Tschanz, B. (2005). Rape Perception Differences Between Japanese and American College Students: On the Mediating Influence of Gender Role Traditionality. *Sex Roles*, 52(5), 379-392.

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING
Table 3

Victim-Offender Relationship/ Disclosure Crosstab

Relationship	Disclosure		<u>Total</u>
	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	
<u>Stanger</u>			
Count	1	1	2
% within Relationship	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
% within Disclosure	3.1%	2.3%	2.7%
<u>Friend/Acquaintance</u>			
Count	11	22	33
% within Relationship	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
% with Disclosure	34.4%	51.2%	44.0%
<u>Partner</u>			
Count	7	5	12
% within Relationship	58.3%	41.7%	100.0%
% within Disclosure	21.9%	11.6%	16.0%
<u>Familial</u>			
Count	13	15	28
% within Relationship	46.4%	53.6%	100.0%
% within Disclosure	40.6%	34.9%	37.3%
<u>Total</u>			
Count	32	43	75
% within Relationship	42.7%	57.3%	100.0%
% with Disclosure	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING
Table 4

Victim-Offender Relationship/ Reporting Crosstab

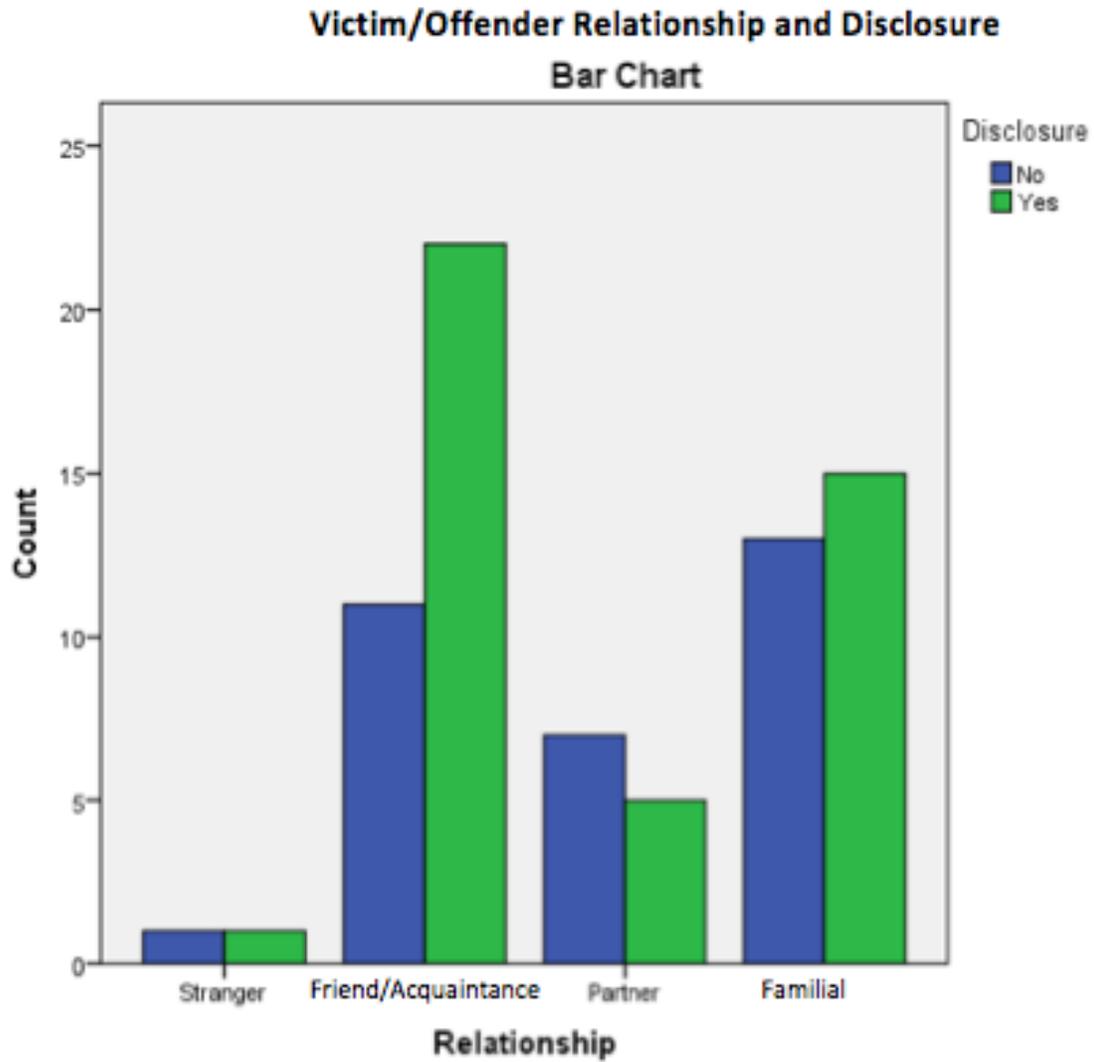
Relationship	Reporting			Total
	Missing	No	Yes	
<u>Stranger</u>				
Count	0	2	0	2
% within Relationship	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
% within Disclosure	0.0%	3.4%	0.0%	2.7%
<u>Friend/Acquaintance</u>				
Count	6	24	3	33
% within Relationship	18.2%	72.7%	9.1%	100.0%
% with Disclosure	60.0%	41.4%	42.9%	44.0%
<u>Partner</u>				
Count	0	12	0	12
% within Relationship	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
% within Disclosure	0.0%	20.7%	0.0%	16.0%
<u>Familial</u>				
Count	4	20	4	28
% within Relationship	14.3%	71.4%	14.3%	100.0%
% within Disclosure	40.0%	34.5%	57.1%	37.3%
<u>Total</u>				
Count	10	58	7	75
% within Relationship	13.3%	77.3%	9.3%	100.0%
% with Disclosure	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING
Table 5

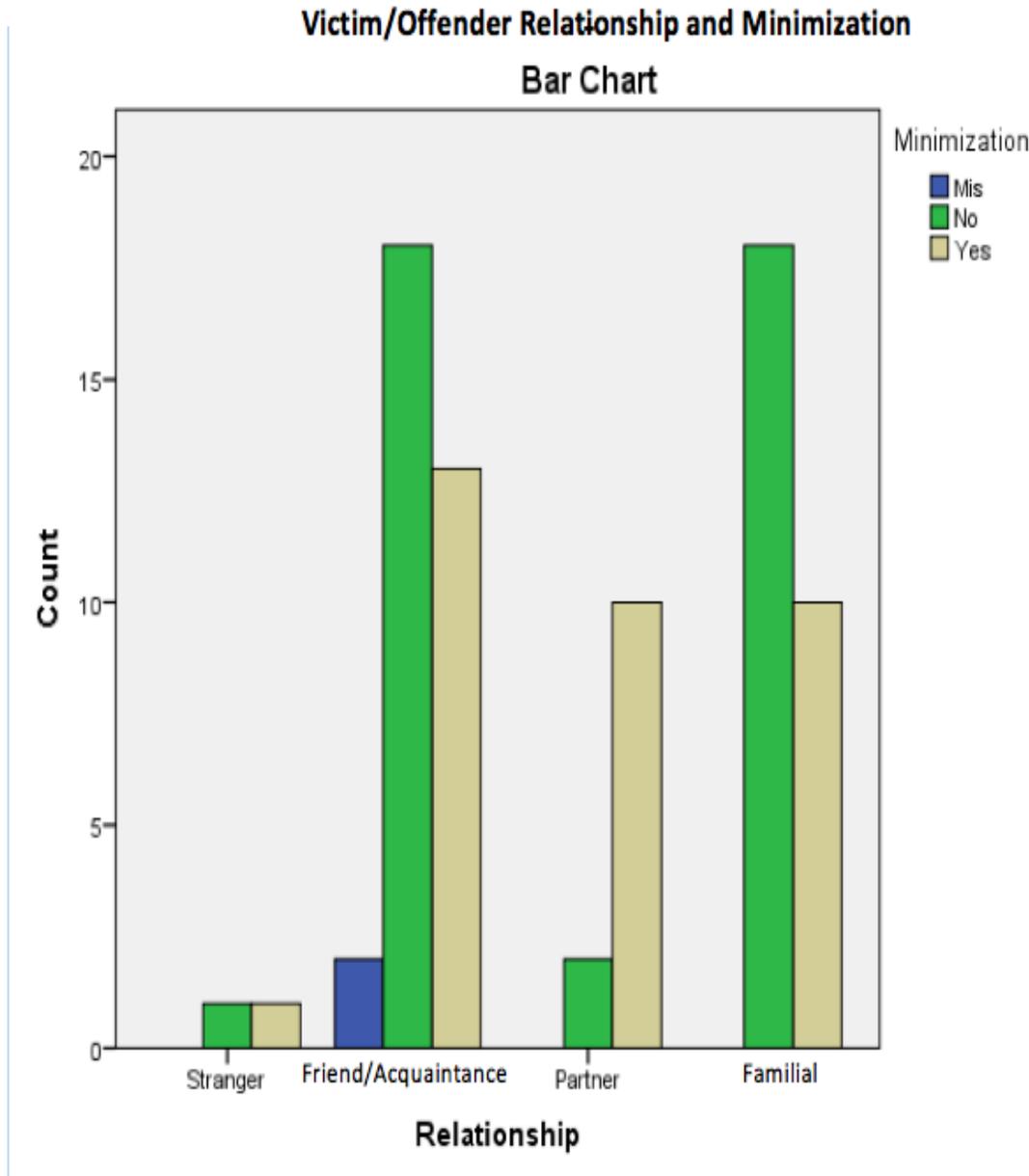
Victim-Offender Relationship/ Minimization Crosstab

Relationship	Minimization			Total
	<u>Missing</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	
<u>Stanger</u>				
Count	0	1	1	2
% within Relationship	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
% within Disclosure	0.0%	2.6%	2.9%	2.7%
<u>Friend/Acquaintance</u>				
Count	2	18	13	33
% within Relationship	6.1%	54.5%	39.4%	100.0%
% with Disclosure	100.0%	46.2%	38.2%	44.0%
<u>Partner</u>				
Count	0	2	10	12
% within Relationship	0.0%	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
% within Disclosure	0.0%	5.1%	29.4%	16.0%
<u>Familial</u>				
Count	0	18	10	28
% within Relationship	0.0%	64.3%	35.7%	100.0%
% within Disclosure	0.0%	46.2%	29.4%	37.3%
<u>Total</u>				
Count	2	39	34	75
% within Relationship	2.7%	52.0%	45.3%	100.0%
% with Disclosure	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING
Figure 1



Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING
Figure 2



Running head: VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND REPORTING
Figure 3

