

# Excerpts

## **Excerpt from the Introduction**

... Clergy and other religious professionals are in a good position for helping survivors of acquaintance rape. Polls have shown that a majority of people seeking help for mental health issues prefer (1) to turn to professionals who present spiritual values and beliefs and (2) to have their own values and beliefs integrated into the helping process. Because people look to clergy and religious professionals as important sources of comfort and support, these representatives of faith communities are in a focal position to help those who suffer from traumas such as acquaintance rape. It does not mean, however, that these professionals have the necessary training to help. Religious professionals have a range of experiences with survivors of acquaintance rape. Some seek out extensive training. Many, however, are ill equipped to be pastorally effective. To be caring partners in the healing process, religious professionals must (1) know the prevalence and definitions of acquaintance rape as discussed above; (2) know the facts and distortions about acquaintance rape, including why some women do not report and the consequences if they do; (3) understand some theoretical constructions around brokenness and healing, including sociohistorical, trauma, and pastoral theological theories; (4) appropriately respond to a survivor's needs while being aware of sensitive issues surrounding these responses; and (5) make informed and appropriate referrals. We will attend to these latter four tasks in the following chapters.

## **Prevalence of Acquaintance Rape**

Acquaintance rape is not an aberration. It is an everyday part of a young adult woman's "education." ... Statistics tell us the startling truth: For American women over age 18:

1 in 3 are sexually assaulted in their life times,  
1.3 are raped every minute,  
78 per hour,  
1871 per day,  
683,000 per year.

One in four or five women (20 to 25 percent) on a college campus is the survivor of rape or attempted rape, and, of that number, 84 percent of the rapes or attempted rapes are committed by an acquaintance. The risk of rape

is four times higher for women ages sixteen to twenty-four than for any other age group. Tersely put, the majority of rapes are not committed by the stranger from the bushes, but by the family member, friend, or colleague from next door. Fear of the unknown thus yields to fear of the known, the familiar, the trusted. But the trauma does not end there. Because women experience fear (brought on by real and perceived threats), guilt, shame, self-blame, and distrust of authority systems, less than 16 percent of survivors of acquaintance rape report their assaults to law enforcement agencies. The number is even lower for African American women. Further, the same number of individuals who do not report the rape to authorities (84 percent) do not seek medical assistance following the acquaintance rape. Too often, rape survivors feel they are victimized by medical personnel. ...

### **Method and Scope**

In a growing sea of work on sexualized violence, this work focuses on the psychospiritually traumatic effects of acquaintance rape on adult women in the United States. While acquaintance rape can be perpetrated by both men and women, as well as one offender or several at once, I will focus on incidents that include one female victim raped by one known male perpetrator. I do not consider marital rape in the category of acquaintance rape because both the wider literature and the legal system place that conversation under the heading of domestic violence. In keeping with a feminist research design, I asked each research participant to determine if her experience met my definition of acquaintance rape. The only definitional requirements I set were that the survivor at the time of the rape was an adult woman (of consenting age), she knew the male assailant before the rape, and she defined the event as unwanted sexual activity or violence. ...

Pastoral careproviders working with survivors of acquaintance rape can include college chaplains, hospital chaplains, military chaplains, congregational pastors, priests, and rabbis. They need not be ordained. This book will concentrate on guidelines for any pastoral careprovider or religious professional working with survivors. ...