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**Women who have Experienced Rape: Responses from others,
Internalization and Recovery**

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Negative reactions upon disclosure of rape have been found to have negative effects on recovery. This study focuses on how social pre-conceptions of raped women are conveyed upon disclosure. A special focus was on how pre-conceptions are conveyed in encounters with police and legal representatives. Ten semi-structured interviews were analysed, using abductive thematic analysis. Results show that professionals were perceived to convey an image of the raped women as unimportant, questionable and to blame. Informants struggled to understand themselves, not wanting to be a burden, and wishing for some kind of justice. In encounters with raped women, professionals' must be aware of her sexual trauma and the potential trauma from previous experiences of not being listened to, being questioned and blamed.

Rape has always been part of human society, however, the view and understanding of it has shifted through times. Beginning in the 1960's Women's rights movements and feminist movements have challenged our understanding of rape, focusing on the harm victims suffer, changing definitions and increasing the number of prosecutions (Conley, 2014; Unger, 2004).

During the last 50 years, several laws that strengthen victims' rights have been passed in Sweden (Kvinnojourern, 2020). The latest of these changes emphasises consent in sexual encounters (JuU29, 2017/2018). Today, Swedish legislation defines rape as: intercourse or equivalent sexual acts, depending on the degree of violation, with a person who is unwilling, unable to either comprehend or consent to the act, or in some way dependent on the perpetrator (Criminal Code, Ch. 6, §1; author translation). Committing such acts is punishable with jail between two to six years.

In 2019, 8,820 reports of rape were made to Swedish police. However, in the Swedish crime victim survey (NTU) just over 117, 000 respondents self-reported one or more serious sexual assaults. This is in line with the accepted supposition that most cases of sexual abuse go unreported (Brå, 2019a). Women are unquestionable more often victims of sexual abuse than men are. For example, in 2019, 4,780 reported rapes were against women and only 261 involved a male victim. Women between the ages of 20-24 were most exposed (Brå, 2019a; Söderström, Lifvin & Viberg, 2019). Although Swedish police investigate 94% of reported cases of rape, only 5% of these cases lead to trial and even fewer to a sentencing (Brå, 2019b).

Women, Socialization and Rape

The feminist movement has long concerned itself with addressing sexual abuse, framing it as a crime and demanding laws to protect women and punish perpetrators (Gemzöe, 2014; MacPhail, 2016). Radical feminism posits that sexual violence is not

only an act of aggression but rather a means of men's social dominance over women. From a radical feminist standpoint, oppression is not only manifested in the actual violence against women but also in every woman having a heightened fear of victimization, restraining women's ability to be active in the public arena. Women are socialised to fear sexual violence partly through their lived experience of sexual assault, partly from hearing about other women's experiences and from growing up viewing sexual violence as a risk in every woman's life (Rennison, 2014).

Radical feminism emphasizes the social dimensions of sexual abuse and rape (Gemzöe, 2014). Cultural understandings and social context affect how raped women understand both the crime as well as themselves as someone who has been raped (Kennedy & Prock, 2018). In a study by Chasteen (2010) the most common conception among the female respondents were that the lifetime risk of being raped by a stranger was between 11% and 20% and the risk of being raped by someone you know was rated over 50%. In other words, men's violence towards women can be viewed as something that women culturally learn through socialisation, and radical feminism posits that rape is one of the most extreme ways of the patriarchy to express oppression (Millett, 1970). Women's internalized fear of sexual violence serves to disempower them and preserve the power of men. Some radical feminists would even go as far as to claim that all heterosexual sex is an expression of patriarchy's power and that no equal sex can occur between women and men until the patriarchy has been overthrown and heterosexuality transformed (Millett, 1970).

In recent years, the MeToo movement has brought further attention and public discussion on the prevalence and consequences of sexual abuse and rape. It has become apparent in the general public that sexual violence and harassment against women is widespread and that all women can be targeted. A study by Alaggia and Wang (2020) show that the MeToo movement has helped women to overcome internal barriers, such as fear of others blaming them, self-blame, and shame. This overcoming has made it easier for women to disclose what they have been through. In that way, social media has become a tool for women's resilience and empowerment through the support from others with similar experiences (Alaggia & Wang, 2020). Another study by Szekeres, Shuman and Saguy (2020) investigated how the public's view of sexual assault has changed after MeToo. Results show that dismissal of sexual assault was lower after MeToo and, further, that this reduction persisted six months later. Some researchers argue that as gender-based violence stem from social norms these norms can also be changed (Unger, 2004). In line with this, it seems that social movements, like MeToo, can alter the public's view and social norms and by extension change people's internalized norms.

Rape and its Intra-psychological Consequences

The notion that victims of sexual abuse suffer trauma reactions is relatively new. In 1980, Symonds described how patients who had suffered sexual violence showed the same psychological reactions as Vietnam veterans and police officers (Symonds, 2010). Today, an extensive amount of research shows that women who have been raped suffer traumatic reactions among which depression, anxiety and post-traumatic disorder (PTSD)

have been found to be prevalent (Maercker, Hecker, Augsburger & Kleim, 2018; Bronner et.al., 2009; Glenn & Byers, 2009; Wilson & Miller, 2016). According to diagnostic manual DSM-V, symptoms of PTSD include intrusion, avoidance, negative cognitive changes and hyper-arousal (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Rape is one of the most common events associated with the development of PTSD (Maercker et.al., 2018; Bronner et.al., 2009). In a study by Bronner, et.al. (2009) the current prevalence of PTSD in women in the population of Netherlands was 5,3% and rape was the most likely event to be associated with PTSD. Another study by Masho and Ahmed (2007), examined how the victim's age at the time of the assault affected the development of PTSD; women who were sexually assaulted before the age of 18 developed PTSD to a higher degree (35,3%) than women who were victimized after the age of 18 (30,2 %). For women who had not been sexually abused, the rate of PTSD was significantly lower (8,1%). In other words, women who have been sexually abused are at a higher risk to develop PTSD than women who have not been sexually abused, and it seems that the earlier a woman is victimized the higher the risk of PTSD (Masho & Ahmed, 2007).

Besides clinical diagnosis, self-blame, loneliness, suicidal thoughts, shame and guilt are also prevalent among victims of sexual abuse (Glenn & Byers, 2009; Wilson & Miller, 2016). Shame has been emphasised as a central emotional consequence among women who have been raped. From a psychological perspective, shame is an emotion that is directed inwardly towards the person her/himself (Bonanno et.al., 2002). Inwardly focused emotions, like shame, risk causing self-blame and concealment (Bonanno et. al., 2002), and is the affective component of stigmatization (Kennedy & Prock, 2018). Shame has been associated with non-disclosure and a higher risk of victims internalizing symptoms (Bonanno et.al., 2002; Negrao, Bonanno, Noll, Putnam & Trickett, 2005). Furthermore, shame is also an important emotional process for victims developing PTSD (Feiring, Taska & Lewis, 2002).

While shame is an emotion focused at the self, guilt is an emotion focused on the impact of one's actions on others (Duncan & Cacciatore, 2015). While both guilt and shame involve negative affect, guilt arises when a person evaluates her/his behaviour as a failure with focus on the specific actions (Feiring, Taska & Lewis, 1996). Concerning victims of rape, the more individuals perceive themselves as responsible for what happened the more guilt they risk feeling (Glenn & Byers, 2009).

Besides intra-psychological processes, previous research highlight the importance of victims receiving social support, having positive effects on their recovery (Ullman, 1996; Sarkar & Sarkar, 2005). Positive social support has been associated with victims' perceiving themselves more positively, after the abuse. Consequently, the reactions of others play a role in preserving victimized women's sense of worth (Littleton, 2010).

Women Who Have Been Raped and the Reactions of Others

Previous research shows that social reactions, positive and negative, upon disclosure affect victims' psychological adjustment. Negative social reactions (i.e. blame, disbelief, being treated differently, egocentric responses) upon disclosure have been

associated with negative impact on the victim's adjustment and recovery (Ullman, 1996; Ullman, Townsend, Filipas & Starzynski, 2007; Ullman & Peter-Hagene, 2014; Littleton, 2010). Negative social reactions are related to victims' maladaptive coping strategies, an increased risk of self-blame and to the risk of developing PTSD-symptoms (Ullman et al., 2007). Negative reactions of others have also been related to more characterological self-blame, (i.e. victim's attributing blame to unchangeable factors; Ullman, 1996). It seems that, the more severe the sexual assault is (i.e. more injuries, the degree of violence and threat) the more negative reactions victims display (Ullman et al., 2007; Campbell, Dworkin & Cabral, 2009).

Although positive social reactions seem not to be as strongly associated with victim's recovery as negative reactions, positive reactions of others have been associated to victims' recovery and fewer negative psychological reactions. In a study by Ullman (1996), victims who reported that others listened to them showed fewer psychological symptoms and better self-rated recovery. In another study, victims reporting positive social reactions also reported more perceived control over recovery as well as less PTSD symptoms (Ullman & Peter-Hagene, 2014). It seems that positive reactions help victims engage in more adaptive forms of coping (Ullman, et al., 2007).

Consequently, social reactions following disclosure influence raped women's recovery and how they perceive themselves after they have been victimized. The following text will present key concepts in other's reactions to victims of rape, as well as the process of the woman internalizing these reactions as part of herself. Secondary victimization, focusing raped women's encounters with police and court system, will also be outlined.

Stigmatization. Stigma refers to an attribute in the individual that leads to social disapproval (Bos, Pryor, Reeder & Stutterheim, 2013). Stigmatization takes place in societal, individual and interpersonal levels. Stigma occur when an individual deviate from a perceived norm and face negative reactions and disapproval from others (Bos et al., 2013). Previous studies have identified different types of stigmatization. *Anticipatory stigmatization* refers to the degree to which individuals fear or expect to be stigmatized upon disclosure. *Internalized stigma* refers to how an individual internalizes (i.e. incorporates social ideas and norms into themselves) negative beliefs of the subject in question. *Cultural stigmatization* refers to societal ideologies that exists concerning the subject in question (Overstreet & Quinn, 2013). *Self-stigma* refers to how the woman have internalized a stigmatized role and how she internally views herself as abnormal (Deitz, Williams, Rife & Cantrell, 2015).

Previous research shows that the higher the degree of stigmatization, the more risk of behaviours such as avoidance, isolation and lack of disclosure (Kennedy & Prock, 2018). Stigma, and especially self-stigma, is associated with severity of trauma-symptoms (Deitz, et.al., 2015).

Self-blame. Self-blame has partly been related to guilt (Glenn & Byers, 2009) and partly to shame (Bonanno et. al. 2002; Negrao et. al., 2005). The level of self-blame has been related to severity of abuse (i.e. the more severe the abuse, more violence and more physical injuries, the less self-blame; Ullman, et al., 2007). Janoff-Bulman (1979) distinguished between two types of self-blame. *Behavioural self-blame* refers to when the victim attributes the blame to a modifiable behaviour. *Characterological self-blame*

refers to when the victim attributes blame to unchangeable factors. While behavioural self-blame is related to control, characterological self-blame is related to self-esteem (i.e. how they perceive their own worth). Examples of behavioural self-blame could be “I shouldn’t have drunk that much” or “I shouldn’t have walked home alone”. Examples of characterological self-blame could be “I am a person who deserves to be raped”. Consequently, although self-blame is a cognitive process, it also has an affective component, in that the more women are convinced they are responsible for sexual assaults the more guilt and self-blame they feel (Glenn & Byers, 2009). Previous research shows that when a victim of sexual abuse display a higher degree of self-blame the more negative outcomes, including more PTSD-symptoms (Kennedy & Prock, 2018; Ullman et. al., 2007).

Internalization. Internalization refers to when an individual incorporates social ideas and norms into themselves, affecting the individual’s perception of the world and of themselves in this world. Internalization is part of the need for a conceptual frame of reference for individuals to understand and participate in society. In the process of internalization, culture prescribes what is regarded as allowed and what is prohibited or taboo. Internalization can be described as the individual receiving social messages and transforming them into self-talk. After repeating the messages, they become integrated into the individual perception of her/himself (Lawrence & Valsiner, 2003).

According to this process, social messages that normalize male sexual aggression is conveyed within women’s socialization and in time becomes internalized. Such internalization affects the internal appraisal of sexual violence and further, affect how the victim process negative emotions that arise from being sexually abused (Sinko, Munro-Kramer, Conley & Saint Arnault, 2020). Previous research shows that many victims of sexual abuse do not want to label their experience as “sexual assault” or “rape” (Sinko et al., 2020; Kilimnik, Boyd, Stanton & Meston, 2018). Those who do label their experience as rape and sexual assault have a higher tendency to internalize the assault into their sexual self-schema, i.e. have lower levels of sexual functioning (Kilimnik et al., 2018).

Secondary victimization. Secondary victimization (/re-victimization) refers to that victim’s disclosure can revive and exacerbate the traumatic experience of being raped (Campbell & Raja, 1999; Campbell et.al., 2009). Re-victimization may happen when a victim feels that her/his story is met with disbelief or emotional distance (Campbell 2005; Patterson, 2010).

Most victims of sexual assault (approximately 2/3) do not press charges. Out of those who do, almost half express dissatisfaction with the response they receive (Monroe et. al., 2005), and interactions with police are prime contributors to secondary victimization (Maier, 2008; 2014).

Furthermore, previous research shows that many victims of rape fear negative reactions from community professionals if seeking help (Logan, Evans, Stevenson & Jordan, 2005). Shame, self-blame, stigma and blame from others can be barriers for women seeking help, and reporting to police (Logan et. al., 2005). In previous research, the most common perception of victims is that police and legal representatives show disbelief and that their cases are not taken seriously. Victim’s negative experiences with police (i.e. blame, doubt and judgement) is associated with increased PTSD symptomatology and increased psychological stress (Campbell et.al., 2009).

In a study by Campbell and Raja (1999) mental health professionals reported that they themselves engaged in behaviour that could be labelled secondary victimizing and therefore harmful to victims of rape. However, the mental health system and the criminal justice system are different when it comes to victims of rape and negative reactions of professionals. In a study by Logan, et al. (2005), women described barriers of seeking help and reporting. They described secondary victimization when talking about the criminal justice system, however, when talking about the mental health system this phrase was not used. Consequently, there is a higher fear of secondary victimization in encounters with police and criminal justice system, than when meeting with mental health professionals.

Consequently, there is an intricate and social system involved in the process of victims trying to understand themselves and what they have been subjected to; a process that is partly intra-psychological, partly dependent on the reactions of others.

Aim and Specific Research Questions

The focus of this study was on women who have been raped and how social pre-conceptions of raped women are conveyed upon disclosure. A special focus was on how these pre-conceptions are conveyed in encounters with police and representatives for the legal system. Another focus was on if, and how, the conveyed preconceptions are internalized in the woman's understanding of the crime and in her understanding of herself. Lastly, focus was on how women who have been raped talk about their needs when trying to recover.

Specific research questions were: How is the social preconception of raped woman conveyed in the reactions of others upon disclosure? How is the social preconception of raped women conveyed in encounters with police and legal representatives? How do raped women understand themselves as a "raped woman", e.g. do they view themselves differently, and if so, how do they cope with such a change? What needs do women who have been raped express?

Method

The material consisted of ten interviews with women who had been raped, and who had reported to police and/or sought emergency medical care after the assault.

Informants

Ten women between the ages of 20 to 40 years participated in this study. Three of the women had been raped >5 years ago, while seven women had been raped during the last year. Informants had been raped by either a partner, a friend, an acquaintance, someone they just recently met, or someone unknown. One woman had the experience of

selling sex. All informants, but one, had been in contact with police when reporting and all had been in contact with health care professionals when seeking medical care. At the time of the interview, two women had the experience of their cases being tried in court. However, in both these cases the perpetrator had been found not guilty. To safeguard informants' privacy, no more detailed information is provided.

Procedure

This study is part of an ongoing research project titled "Female rape victims: Quality of initial police and medical care contact", led by Ph.D. Lisa Rudolfsson. Other studies from this project focus on the experiences of police and medical personnel. The project is funded by the Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority (project id: 3108/18). The project has been ethically reviewed and approved by the regional ethical board in Gothenburg (ref no: 883 18).

This study is based on the material from an ongoing data collection (at the time of this study, three additional interviews are planned). Informants were recruited by Lisa Rudolfsson who contacted support organizations and different gynaecological emergency units, to forward a letter of inquiry to members/patients. The letter described the overall aim of the project and of the interview and emphasised that participation was voluntary. Informants who were interested in taking part in an interview were urged to contact Lisa Rudolfsson. Five interviews were conducted at the University of Gothenburg and five interviews were conducted in conference rooms at hotels in the city's where informants lived. All interviews were conducted by Lisa Rudolfsson and lasted for 1.5 to 2.5 hours each. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, including non-verbal communication and pauses, by Lisa Rudolfsson using no qualitative software.

Interview Guide

The interviews were semi-structured, and every interview started with explaining that the focus for the interview was on encounters with police and medical personnel, but that informants were free to talk about anything they found important. Thereafter, informants were asked when the rape took place and what relationship informants had to the perpetrator/s (see Appendix 1). Other questions asked about both positive and negative experiences of encounters with police and medical personnel, the reactions of others, what need for support informant had. Questions were also asked about informants view on justice and restoration. All questions were open-ended, and the interviewer allowed informants to follow their own concerns. The interviewer used follow-up questions so that informants could give concrete examples and develop their reflections. All interviews ended with the interviewer asking informants if there was something important to them that they had not talked about, how they felt while talking about this topic in an interview and how they thought that they would feel afterwards. Informants

were invited to contact Lisa Rudolfsson if they thought of something in hindsight or if they needed to discuss the feelings evoked by participating in the interview.

Analysis

This study is phenomenological in its approach (Szklarski, 2004). It is an attempt to understand the essence of the informant's experiences and their understanding of the reality they live in. Epistemologically, this study has a constructivist approach meaning that our knowledge and understanding of the world is constructed, i.e. the normative facts we consider to be true are constructed by us (Halbig, 2013). The material was analysed by hand (no computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software was used), according to abductive thematic analysis. In this type of analysis only the data in the material that were relevant to the research question were analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The author first read and then re-read the transcripts in its entirety, without any attempt to fit the data into a pre-existing framework. Thereafter, all parts of the material that related to the research questions were coloured according to four broad categories: *1) disclosure and reactions from professionals and others, 2) internalization, 3) restoration and 4) consequences and recovery*. After this, the coloured text was re-read and coded, where-after the initial codes were discussed and used for re-coding. Codes were then clustered together. Three initial themes were identified and refined into two themes: *"How is the image of the raped woman conveyed?"* and *"How do I understand myself as a raped woman?"*. Themes were reviewed and discussed whereby subthemes were created to structure the material and all data extracts were reviewed in relation to the main themes. Finally, the data extracts were reviewed, and discussed, to find quotations that best capture the essence of each main theme and subthemes.

Results

The focus of this study was on women who have been raped and how social pre-conceptions of raped women are conveyed upon disclosure. A special focus was on how these pre-conceptions are conveyed in encounters with police and representatives for the legal system. Another focus was on if, and how, the conveyed preconceptions are internalized in the woman's understanding of the crime and in her understanding of herself. Lastly, focus was on how women who have been raped talk about their needs when trying to recover.

Results are presented in two main themes with five sub-themes, which are presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1
Main- and subthemes.

Main theme	Subtheme
How is the image of the raped woman conveyed?	<i>As her not being important As her being questionable and to blame</i>
How do I understand myself as a raped woman?	<i>I struggle to understand I do not want to be a burden I need some kind of justice</i>

How is the image of the raped woman conveyed?

As her not being important. Most of the informants had been in contact with both healthcare and police, and some had experience of their case being tried in court. When describing their experiences of the legal system, many described the feeling of being left alone. They described a system that did not prioritize victims of rape nor offered victims sufficient social or practical support. As a result, some informants described a heavy burden being laid on them. Mainly in interaction with police, informants described how no one seemed to take on the responsibility for informing victims of the next step in the process nor making sure that the informants understood the legal process and what was expected from them. When they themselves sought answers, they described feelings of not being heard. Some informants even described how they felt forced to take on the role of police in order for their case to be investigated.

“I experienced that I was the one who drove this rape case. Because they didn’t, and I had to like argue for why they should work with it.”

Many informants described how they felt supported by the professionals they met within healthcare. However, their encounters with police and legal system was more rarely described in positive terms. There were many examples of when the informants felt neglected or brushed off in encounters with police. Informants described instances where the police officer was not present in the moment but seemed focused on other things. Mainly, informants described their encounters with police as officers not tuning in to the situation of a victim and not understanding the needs of a victim. There were also incidents when police showed that they were dissatisfied with the informant. In one example, the informant had difficulty remembering where the rape took place and where she had met the perpetrator/s and when the police officer sighed and seemed disappointed, the informant felt as if she was stupid and annoying.

”You, you just felt so stupid, but it (giggles) yeah...He shouldn’t have that kind of job where he will make calls...to vulnerable people.”

All informants described a common understanding of that the more physical violence that was involved in a rape the more serious others would perceive it. However, even those informants who had been raped in more physically violent ways described how rape was not taken as seriously as other violent crimes. In other words, they described a general understanding of how others perceived physical assaults as more serious than sexual assault, no matter how violent. One informant described that what could have been regarded as physical abuse was disregarded due to its sexual dimensions.

“[I] am thinking like this ‘this should be equated with assault’ also. I mean, he strangled me and he... well...did things. But...they didn’t go into that either, they dropped everything.”

The informants described that the attitude among the police and legal representative conveyed that the experiences of victims of rape were not taken seriously and that much too few victims would get juridical justice for what they had been through. When the informants reported the crime there were instances when officers had expressed, early in the process, that police would not investigate their report nor that their case would be tried in court.

“She said, ‘well this other thing will probably not lead to anything’...she said that, ‘we can’t see that a crime has been committed’.”

Many described how the victim’s story seemed unimportant. Some talked with resignation about how victims lacked a voice and how the story of the perpetrator seemed more important. Informants sometimes expressed a great deal of frustration regarding the low status of being a victim of a sexual crime.

“I can get like super-angry when people talk about the rule of law when it comes to, well particularly rape /.../ and that people are acquitted and, like ‘no one should be sentenced if innocent’. But what about the rule of law for the victim? Because all that are acquitted when you know, that they actually have committed the act. And all cases that are dropped, in what way is that rule of law? I mean, It’s the opposite.”

Informants described a feeling of there being no point in women reporting rape or getting their hopes up for a verdict or even an investigation. They described how rape was portrayed in media and in society in general as there being no point in reporting.

“It’s also like, you hear from like...magazines, the news, and a little bit from acquaintances that... cases like these, what’s the name, that they are being dropped quite often...”

Although most informants shared the experience of their cases being dropped, some did have the experience of their cases being tried in court. However, in all these cases the court had ruled that the perpetrator was not guilty. The attitudes conveyed by police and representatives for the legal system made informants describe a system in which victims were not deserving of legal justice.

“Well, apparently it isn’t enough even if the person admits that he has done it and the court determines that you [victim] weren’t voluntary /.../ And then it’s like ‘okay, then no one can be convicted for committing rape?’”

Most of the informants described receiving support from family and friends; however, they also described how others could be insensitive in their responses. Many informants described how others diminished and sometimes distorted their experiences.

“But there were all these attitudes, like this friend who just ‘but that wasn’t rape, it should have been named sexual assault’. And this isn’t like an evil person, but all these attitudes that exists...everywhere.”

As her being questionable and to blame. The informants described how mainly police and representatives of the legal system distrusted victims of rape. However, many described how others questioned and distrusted victims, even outside the police and the legal system. Some attributed the distrust to them being women, and women’s inferior position in Swedish society. When police and legal representatives could have focused on the crime that took place and on what the perpetrator was guilty of, they instead focused on the victim. Some described how police had questioned them about what they had been wearing at the time of the crime. Informants perceived questions of clothing as indicating that they themselves were responsible for what happened.

“But I know they did the ‘classic’ and asked me what I had been wearing... /.../ I don’t understand that question at all. It’s not like if I had been wearing an overall that it would have prevented anything...”

Police had also been asking questions about informants’ sexuality, e.g., what sexual practices they usually preferred, number of sexual partners and in the cases of more than one perpetrator police asked informants if they previously had been involved in sex with several people at the same time. Informants questioned such inquiries as irrelevant and sometimes as insulting. Many described how others had not believed their story and that they actually had been raped. They described a general image in which the societal norm was that if there is not enough physical evidence no one can be convicted for sexual crimes. Consequently, many of the informants spoke with resignation and hopelessness.

“Because it’s also like this, it feels so very hopeless... I mean the whole system feels so very hopeless...”

Informants also described that police questioned them regarding their alcohol consumption, both in general and on the night of the rape. They described police as taking it upon themselves to decide what was considered drinking “a lot” and that police disregarded how much the informants usually drank or how they usually were affected by alcohol. Police were also perceived to assume that by drinking alcohol women lost control, and informants perceived it as this loss of control were used as implying that the women themselves were to blame for being raped.

“She [police officer] said ‘it’s enough if you drink half a litre of wine’, and ‘the next time you can keep in mind to hold down... on the consumption of alcohol so you won’t lose control’ /.../ And so part of the blame came already then. /.../ As if it was my fault that I exposed myself to that kind of situation where I so easily could be a victim.”

Informants also described that people they knew had sometimes conveyed a blaming attitude. They described how they felt questioned about the willingness in the situation and that family and friends showed disbelief when they disclosed that they had been raped. One informant described this disbelief and questioning as a trauma just as severe as the actual rape.

“The hardest thing with all of this, it isn’t the actual rape but it was how...my...boyfriend at the time...reacted.../.../ That he questioned if maybe I actually wanted it and just regretted it the day after...well...so he questioned me many times, if I really wasn’t in on it...”

Some described how police had questioned them as to why they had not fended for themselves more. Others described how police and legal representatives had implied that maybe what they went through wasn’t rape; maybe they said yes in “the heat of the moment”. Informants also described how police and legal representatives lacked understanding about the common reactions of women to freeze-fright (i.e. becoming like paralyzed) during abuse. They also described being questioned as to why they did not say no, why they could not avoid it or why they did not get out, i.e. people conveying the notion that it was in the victim’s power to stop the abuse and her choice not to. Some informants described such situations with anger.

“I get that it would have been better if I could have said no, but I couldn’t do that. I hadn’t, I mean I didn’t choose to not say no.”

As informants shared the experience of feeling blamed for what happened, some informants seemed to talk about themselves as responsible for causing hurt to their perpetrator by reporting to police.

“It’s crazy, because my thoughts are like, ‘I’m going to be the bad guy’, ‘I’m going to be the one everyone looks down at.’”

For those informants that had their case tried in court, and the perpetrator being found not guilty, the court ruling seemed to confirm their thinking of having been the one causing harm. Some informants also described situations in which they themselves were the one “being punished”.

“I had been like promised a permanent employment, and then I got the message that, ‘we can’t continue hiring you as long as there’s an ongoing police investigation’.”

How do I understand myself as a raped woman?

I struggle to understand. Informants described how they struggled with doubt. Many talked about an uncertainty regarding if what they had been through was actually rape. Oftentimes, this doubt seemed to relate to a lack of physical violence making informants feel like their experiences did not fit within the general idea of rape being violent. Some informants described how they struggled with the feeling of maybe over-reacting; just kidding themselves as to what happened. Others struggled to understand why they had not put up more of a fight. One informant talked about how she practiced martial arts and how she prior to the rape saw herself as someone who would fight back. Being raped made her struggle to understand her own passivity.

“I was like completely paralysed. I...couldn’t do anything. And I have /.../ been training to hit and kick almost my entire life. And still, I couldn’t do anything at that moment.”

Some informants described analysing every move that led up to them being raped, wondering if they at some point could have behaved or gone about things in a different way. Such analysing made informants struggle with who was responsible for what took place; if they themselves had not gotten drunk, if they had not followed that guy or if they had not shown interest to begin with maybe what happened could have been avoided. *“So, then I thought ‘it’s my fault because I have...been drinking like this’...”*

Informants also analysed their reactions afterwards. Some talked about shame, and some described themselves as not reacting in the way a victim was “supposed” to. Informants described an idea of the “right” way of being a victim and a script to follow; being all messed up, crying, and never wanting to have sex again. When moving on, some described it as a struggle to find one’s natural emotions.

“Last fall when it was all quite recent, someone said to me ‘but you seem pretty happy today’. And then I was like...‘should I be happy? Maybe I shouldn’t even be happy?’ Maybe that’s wrong? Considering what I have been through, I shouldn’t be happy...”

Many described it as a struggle to understand if, and how, their experience had changed them. Some described not feeling as themselves anymore becoming a different woman both in regard to who they were before and in comparison to other women.

“I felt very different...after the assault. I was just like ‘I’m not myself, who am I?’...And that feeling is still there in a way. And I think it will always be there to some degree...and that’s like...maybe I’m not ‘this damaged woman’ but like...a changed woman. And...in many ways I still feel like I’m not ‘normal’.”

Although acknowledging that the rape had changed them, informants spoke of a wish to remain the same.

Yes, because I want to be [Dana], this girl who is...well, smart and good at [martial arts]. I don’t want to be [Dana], that’s her, yeah, that girl who got raped’.”

Informants described how they sometimes were not sure whether to disclose their experiences out of fear of becoming someone they could not identify with. Some talked about not wanting to become “that girl” with all its connotations, a lack of identification with the group of “raped women”, and not wanting pity.

“Just this being a... ‘raped woman’ I mean, in a way I don’t want people to feel sorry for me...if I put it like that. I just don’t want to be positively discriminated against...”

Over time, some informants had been able to name their experience as rape while others still preferred to talk about it in terms that were more general, such as “abuse” or “the thing that happened”. All informants talked about feeling guilty. Some struggled with guilt because they did not report to police; they worried that their lack of reporting could put future victims at risk. However, informants who had been raped by someone they knew instead seemed to struggle with guilt for reporting to police; taking on the responsibility for hurting the perpetrator.

“But like, ‘the trial will happen because I reported it. And he could get convicted because I reported it’. Like, if I hadn’t done that [reported] nothing would be happening...”

These informants also struggled with how to feel for the man they once had a different relationship with, who was now their rapist. Some described a wish to hate the perpetrator, however, they also talked about the prior warm feelings towards him, making them still care.

“It wasn’t like this [the rape] happened and then I hated him...it was more like, I’ve actually cared for him the whole time /.../ so that...it was a bit like, some kind of concern was there all along...”

I do not want to be a burden. Informants described not wanting to be an inconvenience for police and healthcare, taking up time for professionals that could be better spent on others.

“Because I felt like an inconvenience. Like, ‘here I am, coming to ruin your workday by getting raped’.”

There were also examples of informants wanting to carry what they had been through by themselves, as they did not want to burden others. Many described how they needed to be strong for themselves and for others. Some were anxious that talking about their experiences could hurt people close to them. Some described it as a personal task to solve everything, to get better and be happy again.

“I never went to counselling within healthcare. I thought ‘I got this’... And I told the midwife that, ‘I’m going to take care of myself and...just be happy’.”

Many informants described how difficult it could be to disclose what they had been through, in particular to those close to them.

“It’s difficult. Actually saying... ‘I have been raped’. I can say it now to strangers without problems, but I can’t say it to people close to me. It’s like I open my mouth, but nothing comes out...”

Some talked about a web of guilt; they felt guilty for causing pain to the ones they loved, while others expressed guilt for not protecting their loved ones from knowing what happened. Some seemed to regard the suffering of loved ones as greater than their own suffering. Mainly, informants talked about this in regards to their parents finding out what happened, and some seemed to blame themselves for hurting their parents by getting raped. Thinking of the amount of suffering caused to her parents, one informant even described it as her not deserving to live. *“fuck, you’re not even worth living, cause how will your mom be able to handle this?”*. Consequently, some of the informants described choosing not to tell their parents.

“Just by seeing your mom (crying) I felt like... (whispers) ‘I can’t tell her...because she is going to be...it’s going to be worse for her than it is for me.’”

However, many informants chose to disclose to friends in the wish to gain support. Often informants described it as easier asking for support from their female friends who were described as helping to carry the informants’ burden.

“And then I called [female friend] and I just cried and cried and like ‘I can’t do this anymore...can you help me?’”

Some described how they gradually had come to terms with that they were in need of attention and support, and further, that they were worthy of getting it. However, all informants talked about being grateful when others acknowledged them by listening and responding empathically.

“But you’re grateful for the little things, I mean for the small strands of hay /.../ there’s absolutely a sense of being grateful.”

I need some kind of justice. Informants talked about the need for some kind of justice, often described as others acknowledging them. Some described how feeling believed by professionals was more important than juridical justice and having the perpetrator found guilty in court.

“[my legal counsel] said, ‘just because the case is dropped it doesn’t mean that we didn’t believe in you’...That was really nice to hear.../.../ yeah...and at that moment, that was actually enough.”

Informants stressed their need to feel like police and professionals in the legal system treated them fair. Some described it as important to have their case tried in court; they wanted the chance for juridical justice. A few informants described a need for justice through the court finding the perpetrator guilty. However, most informants were not

mainly interested in punishing the perpetrator but rather they saw a potential trial as a chance to be heard and recognised.

“Because I really want things to be fair /.../ to me, it really doesn’t matter what kind of punishment he [perpetrator] gets. But that I get my case tried in court...that’s pretty important to me.”

Some informants talked about a need for the perpetrator to fully understand the hurt he had caused them. They wished for the perpetrator to confess and show them that he understood that he had wronged them and that he was sorry for doing so.

“But to me...restoration is probably that, if I were to meet him that he gets to see it for himself. /.../ I just want like a confession that he knows that what he did was wrong and that he’s sorry for...what he’s put me through. That’s what I want...”

Some informants described a need of confronting the perpetrator, forcing him to understand what he had done. One informant had met with her perpetrator, to talk about what happened; when the perpetrator confessed to what he had done, she described it as having her experiences validated.

“I have like gotten confirmation for real, from his side...that it, well that he didn’t care that I didn’t want to /.../ in some way he’s understood that ‘I didn’t want to’ and he understood that from the signs of my body that ‘I didn’t want to’.”

Informants described it as an injustice that they had to carry the consequences while the perpetrator could continue his life as if nothing happened. Some informants, therefore, described a need for the perpetrator to understand the consequences they had suffered due to his actions.

“To me it’s an important closure that this guy finds out...what he’s done to me. I mean what he’s done to me psychologically.../.../ that what he’s done have made it so that I can’t sleep at nights...I have lots of nightmares, I have anxiety...sometimes I find it hard to eat. /.../ And all that is because of him. I want him to...know that...”

Some of the informants talked about revenge as a form of justice; having the perpetrator suffer could restore them. However, as none of the informants had the experience of having the perpetrator found guilty in court, some made it their own responsibility of making the perpetrator suffer at least some consequences.

“[I thought] ‘Well I’ll create my own restoration then’. So what I did was, that when I found out his name I looked him up and found his wife... and I wrote a letter to her. An anonymous letter where I told her ‘this is what happened’ and.../.../ well, then there were consequences for him.”

Many informants described it as justice if they were able to move forward with their life, not letting what happened define them or dictate their future. For those

informants, it became important to keep on living and trying their hardest to be happy despite all. However, putting their justice in overcoming everything sometimes seemed exhausting and difficult to maintain.

“(sighs) I always try to think... that the best revenge is that I’m able to continue my life... (cries quietly) and I try to believe in that, but it’s hard /.../ Like...that the best revenge is... to live the best life I possibly can (voice cracks). And... really like...work hard (sighs) for my own sake, for things to become...as good as they can for me /.../ So that he won’t have... any room in my life at all... (cries). That would be... my (sighs) restoration. But it’s like ‘a work in progress’ I think (giggles). A work that, in some ways, will be ongoing my entire life...”

Informants talked about how their suffering gained meaning if they could use their experiences to help others. They spoke about a need for other women sharing this experience. If their own suffering could guide and protect other women, it would help them in the process of finding justice and restoring themselves.

“I have often felt that ‘I want to help others’. Like, I have learned so much about how you should care for women who have experienced this – what to say and how to act and how you feel. Like, I have signed up to... one of these [non-profit organisations] /.../. Maybe then I can at least... at least I can use this experience to make good.”

Discussion

The informants in this study shared their experiences of negative reactions from others following their disclosure of being raped. Informants described interactions with others as them not being listened to nor taken seriously, and how they felt questioned and blamed. They struggled to understand themselves and they talked about feeling like a burden to others wishing for help to carry their perceived guilt. These results are in line with previous research showing that negative reactions from others negatively affects victims’ recovery and adjustment (Ullman, 1996; Ullman et.al., 2007; Ullman & Peter-Hagene, 2014; Littleton, 2010).

In this study, the informants almost exclusively attributed the negative reactions of others to interactions with police and legal representatives. This is in line with previous research showing that secondary victimization are most common in interactions with police and legal representatives (Maier, 2008; 2014), and that victim’s fear of negative reactions are also more common in such interactions (Campbell & Raja, 1999; Logan et.al., 2005). Consequently, results from this study further indicate that there is room for improvement in victim and police interactions.

Some researchers have argued that changing the attitudes and behaviours surrounding victims of sexual abuse is associated with changing power dynamics between women and men (Rennison, 2014; Chasteen, 2010; Millett, 1970). Women’s rights movements and social movements like MeToo is one of the more recent forces that have brought public attention to men’s oppression of women, calling for change. Collective

culture and norms within it are a tentative process of change, constantly adapting to the individuals in the culture to survive (Lawrence & Valsiner, 2003). Some studies show that the MeToo-movement have already changed the public's perception of rape, for example by making more people believe in victims' allegations of sexual assault (Szekeres et.al., 2020). However, results from this study indicate that many still convey attributions of blame and shame in meetings with victims.

Norms and attitudes on victims of sexual abuse may become internalized and change how the victim understands herself after the abuse (Lawrence & Valsiner, 2003). In this study, informants described feeling ashamed, guilty and blaming themselves for what had happened. Previous research supports the notion that negative reactions of others are associated to victims' internalized symptoms (Ullman, 1996; Ullman et.al., 2007; Ullman & Peter-Hagene, 2014; Littleton, 2010). In this discussion, results will be discussed from the perspective of being a raped woman (highlighting psychoanalytic perspectives), what is needed from professionals, and victim's need for justice. Methodological reflections, clinical implications and directions for future research will also be outlined.

Reactions of others and consequences on victims

The informants described how their experience of rape had changed them, and how they struggled to understand themselves in a new light. They talked about how they had changed in the eyes of others and by extension also changed in their own eyes. The process of integrating a changed perception of yourself has been described as burdensome. In a study by Ranjbar and Speer (2013), women who had been raped reported feeling recovered, but still felt different. The authors, therefore, argued that the term recovery implies a complete return to how things were which may not be possible for someone who has become another. Instead, they argued that the term "learning to live with the experience" is more suited in relation to victims of rape (Ranjbar & Speer, 2013). In this study, the informants described the same – they could not return to how they were before, instead, they had to learn to live with the experience and the change they had gone through and come to terms with the person it had forced them to become.

In this study, informants talked about feeling like they were a burden and a nuisance to others and some described feeling guilty for being raped as this became a burden for both professionals and people close to them. Previous research show that when victims perceive that they are responsible for what has happened to them, they also experience more guilt and self-blame (Glenn & Byers, 2009). Furthermore, a high degree of self-blame has been associated with more negative outcomes, including more PTSD-symptoms (Kennedy & Prock, 2018; Ullman et. al., 2007).

The informants described how they had been met with others' disbelief and how they had felt questioned regarding their own reactions. They also talked about feeling shame for what had happened to them and they questioned themselves as to why they did not react differently both during and after the rape. In previous research, shame has been highlighted as a central emotional consequence of being sexually abused (Feiring et.al., 2002). Shame is also associated with self-blame and victims not disclosing the abuse

(Bonanno et. al. 2002). Shame is also associated with a higher risk of internalizing symptoms and a higher risk of developing PTSD (Bonanno et.al., 2002; Negrao et.al., 2005; Feiring et.al., 2002). As this study seem to further the claim that shame is an central consequence of being raped, and as shame may delay disclosure, professionals need to be aware of victims' needs to work through also that which is shameful – such as blaming themselves for what happened.

Brennan's theory of transmission of affect (referred to in Caputi, 2003) states that the masculine subject can dump feelings onto the feminine subject due to the inequality between the genders. In other words, men who must relieve themselves of negative affects like anger, impotence, guilt, worthlessness etc. can dump those feelings onto a woman, who is inferior to them in power. According to Brennan's theory, women become the vessel for unwanted feelings and the act of rape is the transaction of those feelings. Women are then forced to themselves carry what men have dumped upon them (Caputi, 2003). The theory also states that when men project their negative feelings onto women through the act of rape it makes raped women dirty and spoiled in the eyes of others as well as in how they perceive themselves. In comparison, women who have not been raped instead become pure (Caputi, 2003). Unger (2004) concluded that if a woman is to survive her powerless position in a patriarchal system, she must try to live up to the standards put upon her - one being guarding her sexual virtue. Furthermore, they must also dissociate from the women who have not managed to live up to these standards. One way women dissociate is to disengage from women who have failed to guard themselves, placing the blame of sexual victimization on the victim (Unger, 2004). Such theories indicate that women who have been raped may come to stand utterly alone. Partly, they must carry negative feeling that are transacted to them from men through the act of rape and partly, they are alone as women who have not been victimized may distance themselves from those who have. The results from this study, where informants described how they changed, how they saw themselves in a new light and how they compared themselves to other women, could be understood through Brennan's theory of transaction (referred to in Caputi, 2003) and Ungers claim (2004) of women distancing from each other.

Furthermore, in this study, many of the informants did not want to label their experience as rape and they talked about not wanting to become "that woman". It seems that informants themselves wanted to distance themselves from the label of being a "raped woman" and all its connotations. Some of the informants talked about the connections they felt with others who had similar experiences and how they wanted to help other women who had been raped - indicating a special bond between raped women that separates from others. Several studies have highlighted the need for raped women to find a supportive network where they can share their experiences with other raped women (Mason & Clemans, 2008). This is in line with previous research, where positive reactions and support from others have been associated with recovery (Ranjbar & Speer, 2013; Ullman, 1996; Ullman et.al., 2007; Ullman & Peter-Hagene, 2014).

Internalization and the Demands on Professionals

Rape has been conceptualized as occurring in a social context (Kennedy & Prock, 2018). In other words, the act of rape is reflective of not only the victim/s and the perpetrator/s but also of the society that surrounds them. Social movements, like MeToo, may serve to alter the general perception of rape (Szekeres et.al., 2020). The results of this study indicate that many negative preconceptions still prevail concerning rape and raped women, putting specific demands on the professionals who respond to and aim to help women who have been raped.

In this study, mainly informant's interaction with police was described as making them feel unimportant, questioned and blamed, leaving them feel guilty and ashamed. Previous research shows that most victims of rape do not report and further, that those who do report are dissatisfied with the treatment they receive (Monroe et.al., 2005). Interactions with the police are prime contributors to secondary victimization (Maier, 2008; 2014) and negative experiences with the police are associated with increased psychological stress and more PTSD symptoms (Campbell et. al., 2009). This indicates that there is a need for police and other professionals to change their attitudes and treatment of rape victims. Results from this study highlight the need for victims feeling acknowledged, feeling listened to and believed. This need is in line with previous research showing that positive reactions, such as being listened to following disclosure are associated with increased recovery and fewer PTSD symptoms (Ullman, 1996; Ullman & Peter-Hagene, 2014).

Furthermore, other professionals who interact with women who have been raped need to be aware not only of the rape itself but also of the potential previous experiences of victims when others react negatively and how this may affect them. For example, a therapist may need to reflect on how hers/his behaviour come across to patients who have suffered sexual assault and previously been met with blame and disbelief. Taking into account not only the traumatic event, but also the potential traumatic experiences of disclosing is in line with a more holistic approach to the individuals' history and reactions (Ranjbar & Speer, 2013). When treating women who have been raped, results from this study highlights the need to work with intrapsychic processes of guilt, self-blame and shame – offering help to shift such feelings to become more external (Ranjbar & Speer, 2013). In this study, informants described the need to place the blame not on themselves. Some of the informants talked about a need not of revenge, but rather the need for the perpetrator to understand and acknowledge what he has done and the consequences that followed.

Similar to Brennan's theory of transmission of affect (referred to in Caputi, 2003) is the concept of projective identification. This term was coined by Melanie Klein (referred to in Gomez, 1997) and describes how an individual come to internalize the feelings from another (Gomez, 1997). Killingmo and Gullestad (2011) described the importance of therapists offering help to victimized women to unburden themselves of negative feelings that has been projected on them. Through transference therapy (i.e. how past relationships influence the experience of the present), the victim can be helped to project negative emotions onto the therapist. In such a therapy, a therapist who is aware of their counter-transference reactions (i.e. the therapists reactions to the client), can then respond to the victim's reactions in a more appropriate way (i.e. not blaming or distancing themselves) (Safran, 2012). The goal of transference therapy is to alter the victim's

perception (Killingmo & Gullestad, 2011), making her take back the projection as described by Brennan (referred to in Caputi, 2003) and Klein (referred to in Gomez, 1997). Many therapies that focus on trauma, like exposure therapy, would benefit from merging with analytic therapies, where transference is a key concept (Stultz, 2006).

Victim's Need for Justice

In this study, informants described a wish not to carry the burden of blame, guilt and shame themselves while the perpetrator is able to carry on with his life as if nothing happened. They described a need for the perpetrator to share the burden with them, something that seemed even harder when the informant was in a relation with the person who had abused her.

It is well known that many raped women choose not to report in fear of secondary victimization and being treated unfairly when encountering police (Logan et.al., 2005). In Sweden, statistics show that only a few of the cases of reported rape against women leads to trial and even fewer to sentencing (Brå, 2019b). The term retributive justice describes the traditional way of seeking to punish the guilty one, while the term restorative justice is more victim-oriented in it seeking restoration of the abused one (Koss, 2000). Where retributive justice focuses on achieving convictions, restorative justice instead focuses on making the victim fare well in the juridical process. In this study, informants described feeling left out, not taken seriously and that they lacked insight in the juridical process of their own case. More than seeking punishment, informants described a need for restoration by being treated fairly and with empathy – in line with restorative justice. Koss (2000) described communitarian justice as a form of restorative justice, involving the perpetrator admitting guilt along with an opportunity for a meeting between victim and perpetrator. The aim of communitarian justice is to achieve a long-term solution for the victim and preventing the perpetrator from causing more harm. Communitarian justice also addresses the systematic violence of men towards women (Koss, 2000). In this study, many informants described a need for the perpetrator to understand his actions and its consequences, which is in line with communitarian justice.

However, risks of communitarian justice are that the rapist might abuse the system and use the meeting to abuse the victim, continue to deny and not give a sincere apology and also get a chance so locate victims that have gone into hiding (Koss, 2000). Victim's might be coerced into participating or might not be well equipped to participate. Another risk is that the community will reinforce traditional patriarchal power, blame the victim and support the rapist (Koss, 2000). If communitarian justice is to be used, it must be done so alongside the retributive system that is already in place, and it should only be used when appropriate (Koss, 2000).

Methodological Reflections and Limitations

This is a qualitative study using thematic analysis from a phenomenological and constructivist approach to understand the informant's experiences. Qualitative research

with its generally fewer participants, than quantitative research, does not have the same power to generalize results, nor is it the aim of qualitative studies. Instead, qualitative research and thematic analysis can shed light on the individual experiences of the informants, offering a more in-depth understanding (Yardley, 2000). Thematic analysis is a flexible method, allowing for a range of interpretations on both semantic and latent levels (Yardley, 2000; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The interviews in this study were conducted as part of a larger research project, meaning that the question guide was not specifically tailored for the aim of this study. However, the interviews were semi-structured and pre-conceptions and reactions of others as well as pre-conceptions and reactions within informants were part of the material. Furthermore, different amounts of time had transpired since the informants were raped. Three of the informants had been raped more than five years ago, while seven of the informants had been raped during the past year. This means that the informants had time to process their experiences to a differing degree. Previous research shows that time since the assault is associated with victim's recovery and decreased PTSD symptoms (Ullman & Peter-Hagene, 2016; Levy & Eckhaus, 2020). Some of the informants had been diagnosed with PTSD and received treatment, while others had not which could have influenced their recovery and by extension their answers and participation in this study. It is also possible that movements like MeToo at least partly, have changed public opinions on rape and women who have been raped.

When conducting interviews, there is an interaction between informant and researcher, potentially posing considerations. For example, in interviews the researcher is co-creating the meaning of what is said, as s/he influence the utterances from the informant through follow-up questions, body language and the goal of shared understanding. Complete neutrality in such situations have been framed as impossible (Yardley, 2000) and the researcher therefore need to consider how s/he affects the informants with her/his actions and characteristics. For example, it could be argued that as both the interviewer and the informants were women a more women-centred understanding of sexual violence may have occurred. It might be that as the interviewer was a woman, women informants may have felt more comfortable disclosing their experiences of sexual violence on the hands of male perpetrators. Previous research has found that women who have been sexually abused are more comfortable confiding in another women (Temkin & Krahe, 2008). Regarding how the informants might have been influenced by the researcher during the interviews this can be problematic if they follow the researcher too much, and previous research show that participants to some degree say what they think the researcher wants to hear (Randall, Prior & Skarborn, 2006). Both the interviewer's gender and her coming from the psychological field may therefore have affected what informants chose to say.

Clinical implications

Women who have been raped may carry experiences of not feeling listened to, that they are unimportant and that they have been questioned and blamed. Such experiences

may lead to struggles to understand themselves and their experiences. Disclosure of both trauma as well as disclosure of previous negative reactions from others may be further hindered by the woman's wish not to be a burden for others. This study highlights the importance of listening, recognising and understanding women who have experienced rape so the risk of revictimization diminishes. As well as helping women who have experienced rape not to internalise negative reactions into guilt, shame and self-blame. Consequently, it's important for professionals to mind not only the experience of rape, but also the experience of others negative reactions. Transference therapy may be helpful in that the therapist, through her/his action, can help the woman unburden internalized conceptions and help her externalize reactions and feelings.

Suggestions for future research

Previous research show that many raped women's view of justice is more in line with procedural and communitarian justice, rather than the more common retributive justice (Monroe et.al., 2005; Maier, 2008; 2014; Logan et.al., 2005; Campbell et.al., 2009). Informants in this study highlighted the importance of the perpetrator understanding what he has done and how his actions had affected them. Future research could therefore focus on how a restorative justice could be achieved, within current legal constraints.

Previous research shows that the feeling of change is common among women who have been raped (Ranjbar & Speer, 2013). In this study, informants also talked about the change the trauma had caused them and how they struggled to understand themselves after being raped. Future research could therefore focus on how raped women could be helped to understand such changes, in order to be better equipped to learn to live with their experiences.

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Appendix 1

Frågeguide, intervjuer

Intervju med fokus på bemötande. Om du vill berätta om våldtäkten får du gärna göra det, men jag kommer inte att ställa så mycket frågor direkt om den. Men för att jag ska kunna förstå din berättelse vill jag gärna veta när våldtäkten skedde och vilken relation du hade till gärningspersonen eller personerna?

Frågeområden

- Hur fick du kunskap om studien?
- Vilka tankar och känslor väcktes inom Dig när Du bestämde Dig för att delta i den här intervjun?
- Polisanmälde Du brottet du utsattes för?
- Sökte Du hjälp inom vården efter brottet du utsattes för (om ja, fick Du genomgå en medicinsk läkarundersökning?)

- Fanns det någonting i bemötandet som Du upplevde som hjälpsamt?
- Fanns det någonting i bemötandet som Du upplevde på ett negativt sätt?
- Hade du några förväntningar på bemötandet innan – Hur stämde de bemötningarna med det bemötande Du fick?
- Finns det någonting Du skulle ha önskat av bemötandet från polis och/eller medicinsk personal som Du inte fick?
- Blev Du erbjuden några stödsamtal i samband med att Du gjorde en polisanmälan/sökte hjälp inom vården? (Gick du på dem?)
- Har Du själv sökt samtal för att få prata om det som hände?
- Hur fick du info om att ärendet lagts ner (om det gjorts det)? Hur kändes det? (om rättegång - hur var den?)
- Andras reaktioner?
- Annat stöd?
- Vad är upprättelse? Fick du det? Vad hade du önskat?

- Finns det någonting som jag har glömt att fråga Dig om, eller som är viktigt för mig att veta?
- Hur har det känts att komma hit och prata med mig idag?
- Hur tror Du att Du kommer att känna Dig efter vi har sagt hejdå?

Följdfrågor

- Vill Du berätta mer om det?
- Kommer Du ihåg hur du tänkte/kände då?
- Kan Du berätta mer om varför [xxx] var hjälpsamt?
- Kan Du berätta mer om varför [xxx] blev en negativ erfarenhet?
- Förstår jag Dig rätt om [xxx]?