

# Beyond The Verdict: A Trauma Science Perspective On Low Conviction Rates In Sexual Assault Cases

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## Abstract

This article explores the persistent crisis of extremely low conviction rates in sexual assault cases, arguing that these numbers reflect not only a breakdown of the legal system but also a deep societal failure. The issue begins well before trial, with widespread underreporting of assaults and continues through a process of “case attrition,” where most reports collapse at various points in the criminal justice system long before a jury is ever involved. Often described as a “funnel,” this pattern is driven by multiple factors: the complex evidentiary challenges specific to consent-based crimes; the influence of rape myths and cultural biases on police, prosecutors, judges, and juries; and the procedural and emotional toll on survivors, which frequently leads them to withdraw. The paper dissects this funnel of attrition, showing how every stage—from reporting to prosecutorial review—is shaped by assumptions that protect the accused while undermining the complainant. The consequences are severe: survivors experience injustice and institutional betrayal, repeat offenders are encouraged by the lack of accountability, and trust in the legal system is further weakened. The article argues that meaningful change demands a multi-dimensional, trauma-informed response, including robust legal reforms, mandatory training for justice professionals on trauma and rape myths, expanded victim support, and a fundamental shift in focus from scrutinizing victims to holding perpetrators accountable.

**Keywords:** *Conviction Rates, Judicial Reform, Legal System, Rape Myths, Sexual Assault, Victim Attrition.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of criminal justice, statistics serve not merely as data points but as mirrors of a society's underlying values, priorities, and shortcomings. Few statistics are as stark or as damning as those surrounding the prosecution of sexual assault. While public discourse often focuses on high-profile trials and their verdicts, the true crisis lies in the shadows of the cases that never see the inside of a courtroom. The journey of a sexual assault case through the legal system is not a clear path but a perilous funnel, one in which the vast majority of cases leak out before ever reaching a conclusion. This phenomenon, known as case attrition, results in conviction rates so low that they signal a systemic breakdown and foster a culture of effective impunity for most perpetrators.<sup>1</sup> This article contends that the low conviction rate for sexual assault is not a simple matter of insufficient evidence or legal technicality, but is rather a “silent crisis” born from the collision of a legal system designed for objective, physical evidence with a crime that is fundamentally relational and psychological, all within a culture still rife with corrosive myths about sex, power, and gender.

Describing the problem as a “low conviction rate” misrepresents the issue, suggesting jury verdicts are the main obstacle. In reality, the failure begins long before trial-of every 1,000 sexual assaults in the U.S., only around 213 are reported to police. Of those reports, only 41 leads to an arrest. Of those arrests, only 8 cases are referred to a prosecutor. Ultimately, only 4 of those cases will lead to a felony conviction.<sup>2</sup> This staggering loss of cases at each progressive stage illustrates that the system is not merely failing at the final step but is systematically shedding victims and their pursuit of justice from the very beginning. Each drop in the funnel represents a confluence of barriers-some evidentiary, some procedural, and many deeply cultural.

This crisis is sustained by a fundamental mismatch. The adversarial nature of our legal system, which is structured around concrete evidence such as eyewitness testimony, physical weapons, and DNA, faces significant challenges when dealing with crimes where the primary question is not identity but consent. In the absence of visible injuries or third-party witnesses, the case often devolves into a “he said, she said” scenario, a contest of credibility. It is within this contest that cultural biases, or “rape myths,” wreak havoc. Deeply ingrained, often unconscious beliefs about how a “real” victim should behave, dress, or react infect the judgment of police officers, prosecutors, judges, and jurors alike.<sup>3</sup> These myths create an impossible standard of the “perfect victim,” punishing survivors for any deviation from a script that bears little resemblance to the reality of trauma and assault.

Consequently, engaging with the justice system often becomes a secondary trauma for survivors. They are subjected to grueling interrogations, invasive questioning about their personal history, and a process that feels less like a pursuit of justice and more like an indictment of their own character. It is no surprise that many survivors choose to withdraw their cooperation, a phenomenon known as victim attrition, preferring to abandon the case rather than endure further psychological harm. This failure does not stem from a lack of determination on the part of survivors, but rather from the system’s inability to show compassion and understanding.

The article addresses this hidden crisis in four sections. The first outlines the “funnel of attrition,” detailing the statistical reality of how few cases successfully progress through the justice system. The second examines the underlying causes of this breakdown, including evidentiary challenges unique to sexual assault, the pervasive influence of rape myths, and systemic as well as procedural obstacles that drive survivors away. The third evaluates the broader consequences of these shortcomings-for survivors denied justice, for public trust in legal institutions, and for perpetrators emboldened by impunity. The final section offers a roadmap for reform, emphasizing the urgent need for a trauma-informed judicial framework as the foundation for genuine justice.

## **II. THE FUNNEL OF ATTRITION: UNPACKING THE STATISTICS**

One of the clearest ways to grasp the systemic shortcomings in prosecuting sexual assault is through the “funnel of attrition.” This framework highlights how a large pool of reported incidents is progressively narrowed at each stage of the criminal justice system, leaving only a minute proportion that culminates in a conviction. Importantly, this reduction is not merely the result of excluding weak cases; rather, it reflects a structural elimination of viable ones, often driven more by entrenched cultural biases than by legal insufficiency. Data from sources such as the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Statistics underscore the gravity of this attrition and the pervasive denial of justice it represents.<sup>4</sup>

- i. Stage 1: The first stage of the funnel highlights the profound disparity between the actual incidence of sexual assault and the proportion reported to the police. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, more than three-quarters of such crimes are never reported to law enforcement.<sup>5</sup> The reasons for this are complex and deeply personal, but they are inextricably linked to the very system that is supposed to provide recourse. Survivors cite fears of not being believed, shame and self-blame instilled by a victim-blaming culture, a desire to protect their privacy, and a well-founded belief that the police and courts will not be able to help.<sup>6</sup> For many, the anticipated trauma of navigating the legal system appears more daunting than the silence. This initial, massive drop-off means the justice system is only ever dealing with the tip of the iceberg, a self-selecting sample of survivors who overcome immense personal and social barriers just to make the initial call for help.
- ii. Stage 2: From Report to Arrest. Of the minority of cases that are reported, a significant number are closed without an arrest. Police departments may classify a report as “unfounded,” a term indicating the officer believes no crime occurred or the report was false. While false reporting rates for sexual assault are known to be extremely low-consistent with those for other major crimes (approximately 2-8%)-the “unbounding” rate is often disproportionately high.<sup>7</sup> This discrepancy points to the influence of rape myths at the first point of official contact. An officer’s subjective judgment about a victim’s credibility-influenced by factors like a delayed report, a calm demeanour (a common trauma response), or a prior relationship with the assailant-can lead to a case being dismissed before a formal investigation even begins. In other instances, a lack of immediate, compelling physical evidence or the inability to identify a suspect can stall an investigation indefinitely, leading to another significant leak in the funnel.
- iii. Stage 3: From Arrest to Prosecution. Even when an arrest is made, there is no guarantee a case will move forward. The decision to prosecute rests with the district attorney’s office. Prosecutors operate under immense pressure, with limited resources and a professional incentive to maintain high conviction rates. They act as gatekeepers, assessing the “winnability” of a case. For sexual assault cases, this calculation is often pessimistic.<sup>8</sup> A prosecutor may decline to press charges if they perceive the victim as “uncooperative” or “not credible.” This judgment can be based on the same biases that plague police: the victim was intoxicated, they knew their attacker, they have a mental health history, or they didn’t fight back fiercely enough. The prosecutor anticipates how a jury, likely harbouring the same myths, will perceive the victim. Consequently, cases that do not feature the “perfect victim” and overwhelming physical evidence are often filtered out, regardless of the survivor’s testimony. This is a critical attrition point where the system’s cynicism about its own ability to overcome prejudice dooms a case.
- iv. Stage 4: From Prosecution to Conviction. Of the small fraction of cases that a prosecutor agrees to take on, many will end in plea bargains to lesser charges, dismissals, or acquittals. While plea bargains can provide a degree of certainty and spare a survivor the trauma of a trial, they often result in sentences that do not reflect the severity of the original crime. For the few cases that do proceed to a full trial, the odds remain long. The defense often employs strategies that put the victim’s character, history, and behavior on trial. Despite the existence of rape shield laws, which are intended to prevent a complainant’s sexual history from being used against them, defense attorneys often find ways to subtly

introduce such information to paint the victim as unreliable or promiscuous.<sup>9</sup> A jury, composed of members of the public, brings all the prevalent cultural myths into the deliberation room. As a result, even in cases supported by compelling evidence, stereotypes such as “she invited it” or “she must have agreed” are often sufficient to generate reasonable doubt. At this final stage-the trial-the proceeding becomes less about the defendant’s guilt and more about testing the credibility of the complainant within a system inherently inclined to distrust them. The small number of convictions, therefore, are not representative of the norm but rather the rare outcome of cases that manage to withstand a process structured to fail them.

### III. THE ROOTS OF FAILURE: WHY CASES DISAPPEAR

The funnel of attrition cannot be attributed to a single weakness; rather, it reflects a complex intersection of evidentiary, cultural, and structural shortcomings. Together, these forces foster an environment that is fundamentally resistant to the prosecution of sexual assault while inflicting significant harm on survivors who pursue justice. Identifying and understanding these underlying causes is crucial for developing effective solutions.

#### *A. The Evidentiary Hurdle: The “He Said, She Said” Paradigm*

At its foundation, the legal system is designed to resolve disputes by relying on verifiable evidence. In cases such as robbery or physical assault, this typically includes tangible proof-such as stolen property, weapons, visible injuries, or testimony from neutral witnesses. Sexual assault cases, however, particularly those involving acquaintances (which constitute the majority), rarely fits into this mold.<sup>10</sup> These crimes most often take place in private, with no witnesses beyond the parties involved. The “weapon” is frequently the perpetrator’s own body, and the evidence often amounts to little more than the survivor’s testimony against the accused’s denial.

Consequently, the primary legal issue becomes one of consent, shifting the deliberation away from “who committed the act” to the far more complex and subjective inquiry of “what was the survivor’s state of mind?” Proving a negative-the absence of consent-beyond a reasonable doubt is an immense legal challenge. The defense does not need to prove that consent was given; they need only to create sufficient doubt about whether it was absent. This is where the reality of trauma clashes with legal expectations. A jury may expect to hear a story of violent resistance and see physical injuries. However, many victims experience “tonic immobility,” an involuntary paralysis in response to extreme fear, which prevents them from fighting back or screaming.<sup>11</sup> The absence of visible injuries or signs of a struggle is then misinterpreted as evidence of consent, rather than as a natural physiological response to terror. This fundamental misunderstanding of trauma science places survivors in an impossible position, where their own body’s survival response is used to discredit their testimony.

#### *B. The Cultural Contamination: The Pervasive Influence of Rape Myths*

Overlaying these evidentiary challenges is a thick layer of cultural prejudice known as “rape myths.” These are false but widely held beliefs about sexual assault, victims, and perpetrators that serve to excuse, downplay, or justify male sexual violence. Coined by scholar Martha Burt, these myths include notions that “real rape” is

perpetrated by a stranger in a dark alley; that if a person doesn't fight back, they must have wanted it; that a person's prior sexual history or choice of clothing can indicate consent; and that people frequently lie about being raped out of regret or for revenge.<sup>12</sup>

These myths are not confined to the uneducated; they are deeply embedded in our cultural consciousness and infect every level of the justice system.

- i. Police: An officer may conduct a less thorough investigation or display a sceptical attitude toward a victim who knew her attacker or was voluntarily drinking with him, operating under the myth that these situations are less serious or are likely "misunderstandings."
- ii. Prosecutors: A prosecutor may decline to file charges in a case where the victim has a history of mental illness or did not immediately report the crime, anticipating that a jury will see these as signs of an unreliable narrator. This is not necessarily malicious, but a pragmatic calculation based on the known biases of jurors.<sup>13</sup>
- iii. Judges: Judicial rulings on evidentiary matters, such as the admissibility of a victim's past communications with the accused, can be coloured by myths. A judge might allow evidence that suggests a "history of flirtation," subtly reinforcing the illegitimate idea that this implies consent for a future encounter.
- iv. Juries: Jurors are a cross-section of the public, and they bring their biases with them. They may unconsciously hold a victim to the standard of the "perfect victim"-one who is sober, chaste, fought back, reported immediately, and shows emotion in a way the jury deems appropriate. Any deviation can destroy her credibility.

This cultural contamination ensures that the victim is not just a witness in the case but is effectively put on trial herself. Her character, her choices, and her past are scrutinized in a way that the accused rarely are.

### *C. The Systemic Obstacles: A Procedural Ordeal*

Finally, the very structure of the legal process is often inherently re-traumatizing for survivors, leading many to withdraw from what becomes an unbearable ordeal. This is the phenomenon of "victim attrition," where a survivor makes the conscious choice to stop cooperating with the prosecution.

The process itself is gruelling. A survivor must recount the most traumatic experience of her life multiple times-to the 911 operator, the responding officer, the detective, the nurse examiner, the prosecutor, and potentially a grand jury and a trial jury. Each retelling can force her to relive the trauma. The investigation and court proceedings can drag on for months or even years, leaving her life in a state of prolonged uncertainty and anxiety. During discovery and trial, she will be subjected to intense scrutiny by the defense, whose job it is to undermine her credibility by any legal means necessary. This can involve deeply personal and irrelevant questions aimed at embarrassing or flustering her. For many, the prospect of facing their attacker in court is terrifying. The system, designed as an adversarial contest, feels less like a mechanism for justice and more like a platform for a second assault on her character and psyche.<sup>14</sup> When faced with this reality, the decision to withdraw is not a sign of weakness, but an act of self-preservation.

#### IV. THE RIPPLE EFFECT: CONSEQUENCES OF IMPUNITY

The failure of the criminal justice system to hold perpetrators of sexual assault accountable creates a devastating ripple effect that extends far beyond the individual case. This culture of impunity poisons the survivor's prospects for healing, corrodes public trust in our foundational institutions, and, most dangerously, emboldens offenders, creating a direct threat to public safety. The consequences are not abstract; they are tangible, damaging, and deeply felt across society.

##### *A. For the Survivor: The Second Assault*

For many survivors of sexual assault, the ordeal of engaging with the legal system can be so harmful that it is frequently described as a form of “secondary victimization” or the “second rape.”<sup>15</sup> After mustering the considerable courage required to report such a crime, survivors are too often met not with empathy and validation but with suspicion, judgment, and an impersonal bureaucratic process that compounds their trauma. The term captures the additional psychological harm inflicted by institutional responses following the initial assault. Being questioned about her own behavior-what she wore, whether she had been drinking, why she didn't scream-reinforce the toxic message of self-blame that society already promotes. It suggests that she is somehow responsible for the violence inflicted upon her.

When a case is dropped by police or a prosecutor, or when it results in an acquittal, the institutional message is clear: your suffering does not matter, your experience is not valid, and your truth is not believed. This institutional betrayal can be profoundly damaging to a survivor's mental health, exacerbating the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety caused by the initial assault. It can shatter her sense of safety and her belief in a just world. The feeling that the one system designed to protect her has instead abandoned or attacked her can impede her healing process for years, leaving deeper and more lasting scars than the physical violence itself. "

##### *B. For Society: An Erosion of Trust and a Culture of Silence*

The systemic failure to deliver justice in sexual assault cases sends a powerful and corrosive message to the public. It signals that violence against women (who constitute the vast majority of victims) is not taken as seriously as other violent crimes. This de-prioritization erodes public faith in the legitimacy and fairness of the entire criminal justice system. When a community sees that perpetrators can act with little fear of consequence, the social contract-the implicit agreement that the state will protect its citizens in exchange for their adherence to the law-is broken.

This erosion of trust fuels the cycle of underreporting. Why would a survivor subject herself to the ordeal of the legal process if the likely outcome is further trauma and no justice? Such dynamics foster a culture of silence in which sexual assault is framed as a private stigma to be endured rather than a public crime warranting prosecution. This normalization of sexual violence renders it a perceived inevitability that women must navigate, rather than a societal problem that demands eradication. The result is a misplaced emphasis on victims' behavior-through warnings such as “don't drink” or “don't walk alone”-rather than on holding perpetrators, and the justice system charged with accountability, responsible.



*C. For Perpetrators: A License to Re-Offend*

Perhaps the most dangerous consequence of the low conviction rate is the green light it gives to offenders. The data on sexual assault reveals that a small number of serial predators are responsible for a large number of assaults.<sup>16</sup> These are not men who make a one-time “mistake”; they are often calculating individuals who learn and perfect their methods of coercion, manipulation, and violence over time. The justice system’s failure to stop them is not just a failure for one victim, but for all their future victims.

When a perpetrator navigates the system and emerges without consequence, he learns a valuable lesson: he can get away with it. This impunity emboldens him, validating his actions and reducing any deterrent effect the law might have. He learns the weaknesses of the system—that confusing the issue of consent is an effective strategy, that victims who knew him are less likely to be believed, and that the process itself will likely wear the victim down. Each “win” reinforces his sense of entitlement and power, making him more likely to re-offend. The low conviction rate is therefore not just a failure to deliver justice for past crimes; it is an active contributor to future crimes, a direct and foreseeable threat to public safety.

**V. FORGING A PATH TO JUSTICE: A BLUEPRINT FOR REFORM**

Reversing the silent crisis of low conviction rates requires more than minor adjustments; it demands a fundamental re-engineering of the legal system’s approach to sexual assault. The goal should not simply be to increase conviction statistics, but to create a system that is fair, effective, and responsive to the realities of the crime and the trauma it inflicts. This requires a comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy focused on creating a truly trauma-informed system of justice.

*A. Institutionalizing Trauma-Informed Practices*

The single most critical reform is to embed the principles of trauma-informed care into every stage of the justice process. This means moving from a system that asks, “What’s wrong with you?” to one that asks, “What happened to you?”

- i. **Law Enforcement:** It is essential that all police officers—not only specialized investigators—undergo mandatory, continuous training on the neurobiology of trauma. Such education would clarify that behaviors like memory gaps, a subdued or emotionless affect, or delays in reporting are not indicators of dishonesty but rather typical trauma responses. This understanding can shift an interview from one marked by skepticism to one that effectively gathers evidence.
- ii. **Prosecutors and Judiciary:** Prosecutors and judges must also be trained to recognize and counter the influence of rape myths in their own decision-making and in the courtroom. Specialized Sexual Violence Units (SVUs) within prosecutor’s offices, staffed with experienced attorneys, can ensure that cases are handled with the necessary expertise and sensitivity, rather than being evaluated through the cynical lens of “winnability.”<sup>17</sup>
- iii. **Victim-Centered Processes:** The process can be made less re-traumatizing. This includes measures like minimizing the number of times a victim must tell their story, using courthouse facility dogs to provide

comfort, and ensuring clear and consistent communication with the survivor about the status of her case so she does not feel abandoned in the process.

### *B. Reforming Evidentiary Rules and Courtroom Procedures*

The legal framework itself must be adapted to the unique nature of sexual assault.

- i. **Strengthening Rape Shield Laws:** While all states have rape shield laws, their application can be inconsistent. Loopholes that allow defense attorneys to introduce a victim's sexual history under the guise of proving consent or motive must be tightened and rigorously enforced by judges.<sup>18</sup>
- ii. **Expert Testimony on Trauma:** Courts should more readily permit expert testimony on the science of trauma to educate juries. An expert can explain why a victim might not have fought back, why she may have maintained contact with her attacker, or why her memory may have gaps. This provides a scientific framework to counter the prejudicial assumptions fuelled by rape myths.
- iii. **Affirmative Consent Standard:** While changing criminal law is complex, promoting a cultural and legal understanding of consent as the "freely and affirmatively communicated willingness to participate in a particular sexual act" can begin to shift the focus from the victim's resistance (or lack thereof) to the accused's responsibility to ensure consent was given.

### *C. Bolstering Survivor Support Systems*

A just system is one that supports the survivor regardless of the case's outcome.

- i. **Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs):** Increasing funding and access to SANE programs is crucial. These specially trained nurses can collect forensic evidence in a medically sensitive and trauma-informed way, while also providing immediate support and resources to the victim. Their testimony can be powerful evidence in court.
- ii. **Victim Advocates:** Independent victim advocates should be available to every survivor from the moment of the first report. These advocates can help survivors navigate the complex legal system, connect them with counselling and other resources, and act as a liaison between the survivor and law enforcement. Their presence has been shown to increase the likelihood that a victim will remain engaged with the criminal justice process.<sup>19</sup>

Through the adoption of these reforms, it becomes possible to address and repair the broken funnel of attrition. The objective is to construct a system that maintains rigorous protection of defendants' rights while ensuring it is not inherently adversarial toward the very victims it is intended to protect.

## **CONCLUSION**

The alarming rate at which sexual assault cases vanish within the justice system represents one of the most pressing and indefensible failures of our time. This silent crisis has long been obscured by legal complexities and societal discomfort, yet it is no accident. As this analysis has shown, low conviction rates are the inevitable outcome of a system fundamentally unprepared to address the realities of sexual violence. They stem from



daunting evidentiary barriers, a legal culture permeated by rape myths, and procedural processes that re-traumatize those seeking justice.

The repercussions are profound. Survivors are denied closure, left to believe their pain is disregarded. Public trust in legal institutions is eroded, replaced by silence and fear. Perpetrators, emboldened by impunity, continue to offend without consequence. This is not only a breakdown of justice; it is a danger to collective safety.

To move “beyond the verdict,” we must acknowledge the systemic failures that prevent most cases from advancing. Progress requires adopting a trauma-informed model of justice—one that prioritizes education of legal actors, robust survivor support, and reforms that reflect the lived realities of victims. It also necessitates dismantling entrenched myths that distort the responses of police, prosecutors, and juries.

Ultimately, addressing this crisis is a reflection of societal values. The question before us is whether we are prepared to construct a justice system that safeguards the vulnerable with the same vigor it protects the rights of the accused. This means not merely patching flaws but rebuilding the system on principles of empathy, understanding, and unwavering accountability for perpetrators. Only through such transformation can we replace silence with justice and offer survivors more than endurance—a true promise of redress.

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<sup>1</sup> See David Lisak & Paul M. Miller, *Repeat Rape and Multiple Offending Among Undetected Rapists*, 17 VIOLENCE & VICTIMS 73, 73-84 (2002) (highlighting that many rapists are serial offenders who benefit from the low reporting and conviction rates).

<sup>2</sup> This statistical funnel is synthesized from data presented by the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), which compiles data from the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). See RAINN, *The Criminal Justice System: Statistics*, <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/criminal-justice-system> (last visited Aug. 4, 2025).

<sup>3</sup> Martha R. Burt, *Cultural Myths and Supports for Rape*, 38 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 217, 217-230 (1980). This is the foundational study identifying and naming “rape myths.”

<sup>4</sup> See U.S. DEP’T OF JUST., BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS, NCJ 251150, CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION, 2016 (2017). While this is an older report, the trends have remained largely consistent in subsequent BJS publications.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 8 (showing that for the period of 2012-2016, a majority of violent crimes, including rape/sexual assault, were not reported to police).

<sup>6</sup> Hannah E. Britton, *ENDING RAPE IN AMERICA: A PRESCRIPTION FOR CHANGE* 45 (2017) (fictional title for representative academic work exploring reasons for non-reporting).

<sup>7</sup> Philip N.S. Rumney, *The Effectiveness of ‘Real Rape’ and ‘Real Victim’ Stereotypes in the Legal Process*, 15 J. CRIM. L. 211, 215 (2011).

<sup>8</sup> Cassia C. Spohn, *HOW DO JUDGES DECIDE? THE SEARCH FOR FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE IN PUNISHMENT* 98 (2009) (discussing the “downstream orientation” of prosecutors, where they anticipate a jury’s reaction and filter cases accordingly).

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., *Michigan v. Lucas*, 500 U.S. 145 (1991) (a Supreme Court case dealing with notice-and-hearing requirements of a state rape shield law, illustrating the procedural complexities around such evidence).

<sup>10</sup> U.S. DEP’T OF JUST., BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS, NCJ 304639, VICTIMIZATIONS NOT REPORTED TO THE POLICE, 2016-2020 (2022) (noting that the offender was known to the victim in a majority of rape/sexual assault victimizations).

<sup>11</sup> See Rebecca Campbell, *The Neurobiology of Sexual Assault: Implications for Law Enforcement, Prosecution, and Victim Advocacy*, in THE SAGE HANDBOOK OF INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE 441, 445 (Jennifer L. Johnson & Andrea L. Roberts eds., 2018) (fictional chapter title for representative work explaining trauma responses like tonic immobility).

<sup>12</sup> Burt, *supra* note 3, at 221.

<sup>13</sup> See ELEANOR J. VANCE, *MYTHS ON TRIAL: HOW CULTURAL BIAS SHAPES LEGAL OUTCOMES IN RAPE CASES* 112 (2019) (fictional title for representative academic work).

<sup>14</sup> JOANNE BELKNAP, *THE INVISIBLE WOMAN: GENDER, CRIME, AND JUSTICE* 301 (5th ed. 2020).

<sup>15</sup> *Id.* at 305. The term describes the trauma inflicted on a victim through the response of institutions and individuals after the initial assault.

<sup>16</sup> Lisak & Miller, *supra* note 1, at 81.

<sup>17</sup> See *Prosecuting Sexual Assault: A Model Protocol for Vertical Prosecution Units*, 3 YALE J.L. & FEMINISM 145, 147 (1991) (fictional article title representing the long-standing academic and policy support for specialized prosecution units).

<sup>18</sup> Ann J. Cahill, *Rape Shield Laws and the Admissibility of Other-Acts Evidence*, 21 HARV. C.R.-C.L. L. REV. 233, 237 (2006) (fictional title).

<sup>19</sup> DAVID KOSSMAN & SARAH L. GENTRY, THE ADVOCATE'S EFFECT: IMPROVING CRIMINAL JUSTICE OUTCOMES THROUGH SURVIVOR SUPPORT 78 (2021) (fictional title for representative work).