TITLE: But He's A Good Guy: Exploring the emotions sexual assault victims

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Introduction: Violence against women is a major social justice issue. Previous research suggests that negative social reactions to sexual assault disclosure are associated with negative psychological effects for the victims. Thus, positive social reactions towards the survivor are associated with increased coping skills displayed by seeking emotional support. The present study qualitatively examines the emotions victims of sexual assault expressed towards their perpetrators and the relationship between these emotions and the presence or absence of disclosing their experience.

Methods: Data consisted of 46 first-hand accounts of sexual victimization experiences from the popular social news website, Reddit.com. Using thematic analysis, the narratives were examined and coded for different emotions and respondents' decisions to previously disclose or not disclose their assaults.

Results: The majority of victims did not express negative emotions towards their perpetrators, however, guilt was the most prominent emotion described by the respondents. We found that instances where guilt was present, previous disclosing was more likely. Additionally, narratives lacking negative emotions (anger, guilt, or shame) showed more positive statements regarding the perpetrator, resulting in the "but he's a good guy" frame of mind.

Conclusion: As more attention is drawn to violence against women, these findings educate sexual assault service providers by offering a better understand the variety of emotions experiences by sexual assault victims. This in turn can aid providers on giving providing quality service to sexual assault victims. The present research attempts to shed light on factors involved in victims' decisions to disclose their experience. We recognize that there are limitations. Future research should include larger sample sizes, and involve a wider population than Reddit users.