

Abstract

Sexual violence imprints noticeable marks on a victim (and later, survivor) throughout the person's life. Experiences of victimhood and survivorship prove challengingly intangible in a discursive landscape of denial, appropriation, invalidation, and dismissal. *The Voices of Victimhood and Survivorship* takes the firsthand testaments of selected victims and survivors of sexual violence and analyzes how these cases reflect the inequal dynamics of power over their own stories. Pertinent to this analysis are the disciplines of: rhetorical studies, media studies, English studies, criminology, law, victimology studies, psychology, and violence philosophy—all collaborating interdisciplinarity in the interest of a feminist hermeneutic. These disciplines synthesize the key concepts and theories to be discussed, including the meaning of voice, victimhood, survivorship, the contexts in which these discourses are produced, and how the medium and setting influence voice. Selected accounts—a judicial victim impact statement, a memoir, and an investigative documentary interview—serve as the primary texts upon which these theories comment. The thesis seeks to characterize the meaning and profile of language and power, and to cartograph the journeys of victims into survivors by means of using their voices for recovery and justice.

Key Words: sexual violence, victim, victimhood, survivor, survivorship, post-traumatic growth, voice, discourse, vulnerability