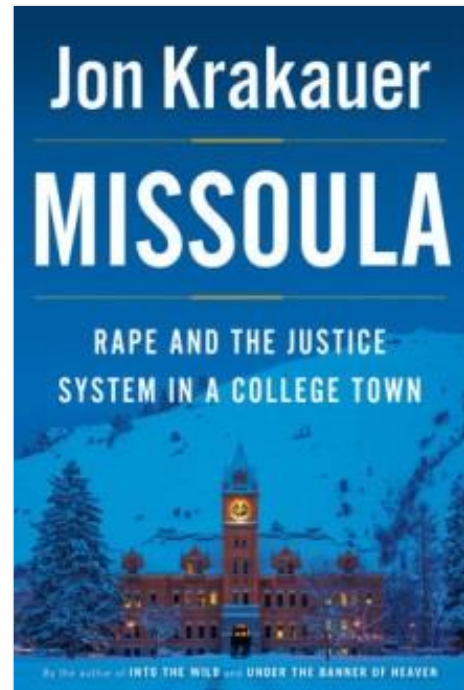




Discussion Questions for *Missoula: Rape and the Justice System in a College Town* by Jon Krakauer

These discussion questions were prepared by the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) for the [Reader with a Cause](#) book club Group on Goodreads.

If you like our questions please feel free to use them – and don't forget to join the conversation online at:
https://www.goodreads.com/topic/group_folder/302827?group_id=114966



1. Overall Reaction?

What did you think of *Missoula*?

Did you find the book controversial or provocative in any way?

Did it change or challenge your perspective on rape and the criminal justice system?

2. Understanding Rape Victims

In the Author's Note, Jon Krakauer explains that *Missoula* is his effort "to understand what deters so many rape victims from going to the police, and to comprehend the repercussions of sexual assault from the perspective of those who have been victimized." (xiv)

Do you think Krakauer was successful in this? Why or why not?

3. Understanding Rape

This book is sprinkled with statistics and facts:

- *"No more than 20% of rapes are reported to the police." (5)*
- *"...psychologists and psychiatrists who study sexual assault report that victims frequently react to being raped much the way Kaitlyn Kelly did...when people are raped, the experience is so traumatic that it often causes them to behave in a wide variety of ways that may seem inexplicable." (70)*
- *"...the prevalence of false allegations is between 2 percent and 10 percent; that figure was based on eight methodologically rigorous studies." (109)*
- *"It is estimated that between 64% and 96% of victims do not report the crimes committed against them....and a major reason for this is [the victim's] belief that his or her report will be met with suspicion or outright disbelief." (110)*
- *"When an individual is raped in this country, more than 90 percent of the time the rapist gets away with the crime." (110)*
- *"This suggests that, rather than being the nation's rape capital, Missoula had an incidence of sexual assault that was in fact slightly less than the national average. That's the real scandal." (341)*

Did any of these facts or statistics surprise you? Why or why not?

Did they help or hurt the case presented by Krakauer?

4. Football Culture vs. Rape Culture

"Rape culture" is a term that was coined to illuminate the ways that our society blames victims for sexual assault and normalizes, encourages, or minimizes sexual violence by men.

Missoula clearly shows the importance of football culture in college towns like Missoula.

In what ways (if any) do you think football culture perpetuates the existence of rape culture? How can we redefine masculinity in a way that would allow for a healthy sports culture that respects women and does not glorify violence or aggression?

5. Rape Kits

Krakauer did a great job describing how traumatic rape kit collection often is. Even with comforting nurses, Allison still described it as “incredibly traumatic.” (16)

Rape kits are routinely collected in television shows like *Law & Order: SVU* and other crime procedurals; however, a much more sanitized version is presented for public consumption. Were you surprised to learn how traumatic rape kits can actually be for survivors?

Does this change your opinion about allegations of victims’ false reports, when it becomes clear how much victims must go through when reporting sexual assaults?

6. "He said-She said"

Violence against women is one of the few crimes that is dismissed or minimized by law enforcement, the media, and others as being a “he said-she said” matter.

"And it's not easy to just throw people in jail when it's a 'he said, she said' scenario." (72)

Why do you think it is so easy to dismiss or devalue crimes that involve violence against women?

7. Rape Victims Should Not be Held Responsible for Fixing Rapists or Protecting Future Victims

One of the survivors in *Missoula* explains the precarious position that victims of rape face:

"She was aware that if Beau Donaldson was charged with raping her, she would face scathing criticism from Griz fans. She understood that if the case

went to trial, Donaldson's attorneys would attempt to destroy her reputation. But she also knew that if she didn't report Donaldson, he might rape other women." (34)

Do you think it is understandable or fair for this survivor to feel a sense of responsibility toward "protecting" future victims?

Why do you think athletes who commit crimes of violence against women are so strongly defended by their fans, some of whom are women?

In what ways do you think we as a society can help to shift the burden of shame and condemnation from the victim to the perpetrator? What type of measures do you think it would take for rapists to reform their views and behavior toward women?

8. Supporting Survivors

"Kelsey stated she was reluctant about pressing charges at this time because she did not want to get anyone in trouble." (38)

"Most of the student rapists...were regarded by their peers as nice guys who would never rape anyone, and regarded themselves the same way....They exist in their own world, and in their world there is often a tremendous sense of entitlement." (119)

No victim should feel the need to preserve the reputations or careers of the rapist, yet feelings like Kelsey's persist. Do you think this is a result of rape culture and the media's propensity to report on rapists' "once-promising" futures, while ignoring or minimizing the harm done to the survivor?

9. Campus Response

How did this book make you feel about the way that campus administrations respond to, prevent, and address sexual assault in the United States?

***To learn more about campus sexual assault, check out:*

- Know Your IX: <http://knowyourix.org/>
- End Rape On Campus: <http://endrapeoncampus.org/>

10. Consent

The University of Montana stipulates that consent "*cannot be inferred 'from silence, past consent, or consent to a different form of sexual activity.'*" (89)

Do you think this language sufficiently clarifies what consent is and is not?
Do you think an affirmative verbal consent is or should be required prior to engaging in sexual activity?