

Perceptions of Date and Stranger Rape: A Difference in Sex Role Expectations and Rape-Supportive Beliefs¹

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The sex role expectations and rape-supportive beliefs which are differentially applied to date and stranger rape were assessed. A sample of 62 college females and 33 males read one of three rape scenarios which varied according to the victim-perpetrator relationship (steady dating partners/acquaintances on a first date/strangers). Then participants rated the extent to which several sex role expectations and rape-supportive attitudes were applicable to the assault. MANOVAS and univariate ANOVAS showed that females' and males' perceptions of date rape, more than stranger rape, incorporated sex role expectations and that rape-supportive beliefs, primarily of males, were stronger in relation to steady date than first date or stranger rape. These findings are discussed in the context of the sex role analysis of rape.

Although it is commonly believed that rapists tend to be strangers to the victim (Matlin, 1987), acquaintance rape is a frequent form of sexual aggression. Estimates of the percentage of rapes committed by a perpetrator known to the victim range from 50% (Rabkin, 1979) to 88% (Russell, 1984), and these acquaintances are often boyfriends and dates (Koss, Dinero, Seibel, & Cox, 1988; Russell, 1984). For example, a recent large-scale national survey revealed that 15% of a sample of female college students had been raped and that 85% were acquainted with their attacker (Koss, *et al.*). Similarly, Muehlenhard and Linton (1987) found that 15% of a sample of university

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women reported having been subjected to unwanted intercourse during a high school or college date.

Thus, it is clear that acquaintance rape is a major societal problem. In this regard, the high incidence of victim blame for its occurrence and the difficulty of persuading jurors that acquaintance rape has occurred (Warshaw, 1988) point to the importance of understanding observers' perceptions of this form of rape. Possibly, these problems might be counteracted with greater awareness of the sex role expectations and attitudes which comprise observers' perceptions. In addition, because, under some societal conditions, behaviors may directly reflect attitudes (e.g., Worchel, Cooper, & Goethals, 1988), an understanding of the processes underlying observers' perceptions might lead not only to a change in attitudes toward acquaintance rape but to a reduction in its frequency.

In regard to observers' perceptions, Check and Malamuth (1983) have suggested that a useful framework for comparing attributions of acquaintance and stranger rape is the sex role socialization analysis of rape (e.g., Burt, 1980). This model proposes that, as a result of the developmental processes involved in learning the societally-prescribed behaviors for one's sex, both males and females develop certain expectations regarding the appropriate sex role behaviors for a sexual interaction. Males are socialized to be the sexual aggressors and females the passive targets, whose societally prescribed role is to control the extent of sexual activity. Thus, according to this theory, rape is an extreme form of traditional male-female sexual interaction rather than a sign of pathological disturbance.

Although this model has been used to explain both stranger and acquaintance rape, Check and Malamuth (1983) suggested that, because of sex role stereotypes associated with the dating situation, such as the belief that women really mean "yes" when they so "no," acquaintance more than stranger rape reflects sex role socialization processes. Similarly, in regard to perceptions, these writers proposed that sex role socialization processes would be more evident in relation to observers' reactions to acquaintance than stranger rape.

Previous research provides some support for the differential influence of sex role expectations on observers' perceptions of date versus stranger rape. Check and Malamuth (1983) reported that observers perceived a more favorable reaction, including greater desire and pleasure, on the part of the date rape victim than the victim of stranger rape. Further, these reactions, especially in response to date rape, were positively related to the observers' level of sex role stereotyping. Moreover, Bridges and McGrail (1989) found that responsibility attributions of date more than stranger rape were focused on sex role and sexual variables; suggesting that the former, more than the latter, is conceptualized as an extension of traditional male-female sexual interaction.

Along with sex role perceptions which may be involved in acquaintance rape, it has been suggested that socialization fosters the acquisition of false beliefs about rape (Burt, 1980). It seems likely that beliefs, such as the woman could prevent rape if she really wanted to do so and a man who is very turned on sexually has a right to force sex on a woman, may stem from learning expected role behaviors in a sexual situation. Indeed, there is considerable evidence that rape-supportive beliefs are linked to sex role attitudes (Burt, 1980; Mayerson & Taylor, 1987; Costin, Kibler, & Crank, 1982; Hall, Howard, & Boezio, 1986). Moreover, the fact that many of these views are relevant primarily to dating situations (e.g., a man who has spent money on a woman has a right to expect sex, and the woman provoked the rape) leads to the possibility that observers might apply them to date more than stranger rape.

Consistent with the assumption that rape-supportive beliefs are applied to acquaintance more than stranger rape, is the evidence that the former is seen as less serious than the latter, (Gerdes, Dammann, & Heilig, 1988; L'Armand & Pepitone, 1982) and that observers are less likely to view forced intercourse by an acquaintance, compared to a stranger, as rape (e.g., Tetreault & Barnett, 1987). Further, studies show that the belief in the victim's general blameworthiness tends to be applied to date more than stranger rape (L'Armand & Pepitone, 1982; Tetreault & Barnett, 1987).

Despite some empirical support, two problems limit the conclusions we can draw regarding the applicability of the sex role socialization analysis to observers' perceptions of date rape. First, the previous investigations focused on only a limited number of perceptions relevant to the model (e.g., Check & Malamuth, 1983; Tetreault & Barnett, 1987) and these perceptions tended to be nonspecific. For example, the perceived seriousness of the rape was measured but not the specific beliefs, such as psychological damage to the victim, which might contribute to the perception of seriousness. Bridges and McGrail (1989) extended the examination of sex role perceptions by focusing on specific sex role-related aspects of the interaction. However, these perceptions dealt with responsibility attributions only. Thus, in order to increase our confidence in the applicability of the sex role socialization model to perceptions of date rape and to attain a broader understanding of the content of these perceptions, the current investigation employed a wider variety of expectations and beliefs than had previously been examined.

Second, other than L'Armand and Pepitone's (1982) study which depicted rape by a stranger, a dating partner, and a dating partner with prior consensual sex; previous investigations employed only a first date (e.g., Check & Malamuth, 1983) or a non-date acquaintance (e.g., Tetreault & Barnett, 1987) in addition to the stranger condition. However, Koss and her associates (1988) reported that acquaintance rape is frequently perpetrated by a

steady date; thus, indicating the importance of understanding the perceptions of this type of rape. Accordingly, the current study, which was part of a larger project including an investigation of responsibility attributions (Bridges & McGrail, 1989), examined perceptions of rape by a steady dating partner as well as rapes by a first date acquaintance and stranger.

Hypotheses

Based on the research reported above, hypothesis 1 predicted that the date rapes, more than the stranger rape, would be seen as extensions of traditional sex role interaction and the individuals involved would be perceived as more traditional. Specifically, it was expected that observers would perceive that date rapes more than stranger rape were characterized by (a) the victim's failure to control the situation, (b) the perpetrator's misunderstanding of the victim, (c) the victim's desire for intercourse, (d) the victim's femininity, and (e) the perpetrator's masculinity. However, no prediction regarding the strength of these perceptions for the steady versus first date rapes was made. On the one hand, sex role expectations might be most salient in highly intimate relationships but, conversely, the game-playing components of traditional sex role interaction might be seen as less important in closer relationships.

The evidence regarding sex differences in sex role perceptions of rape indicates that males, in comparison to females, are more likely to endorse the sex role behavior of male domination over women (Hall *et al.*, 1986) and to believe that rape victims really desired intercourse (Jenkins & Dambrot, 1987). Therefore, hypothesis 2 predicted that males, more than females, would incorporate sex role expectations into their perceptions of rape.

Hypothesis 3 was based on research presented earlier which shows that acquaintance rape is viewed as less serious than stranger rape and on the additional evidence that rape victims are less likely to acknowledge their victimization the better acquainted they are with their assailant (Koss, 1985). This suggests that the closer the relationship between the perpetrator and victim the more likely it is that the rape experience will be minimized. Therefore, it was predicted that minimization of the negative aspects of rape would be greatest when the perpetrator was a steady dating partner and least when he was a stranger. Specifically the hypothesis stated that the assault by the steady dating partner would be most likely and the stranger assault least likely to be characterized by the following rape-supportive beliefs: (a) the forced intercourse was not rape, (b) the victim enjoyed the rape, (c) the rape did not violate the victim's rights, and (d) the victim will not experience psychological damage.

In relation to the perpetrator's and victim's characteristics, many people believe that rapists have psychological problems (e.g., Giacopassi & Dull, 1986) and that rape victims are "bad" women (e.g., Burt, 1980). Although the effect of the victim-perpetrator relationship on these perceptions has not been examined, Koss and her colleagues (Koss, Leonard, Beezley, & Oros, 1985) suggest that psychopathology may be applicable to stranger but not acquaintance rapists. Consistent with this conclusion regarding actual rapists, hypothesis 4 stated that observers would attribute more psychological problems to the perpetrator of stranger than date rape. However, no prediction was made concerning perception of the perpetrators of first versus steady date rape. In addition, although no hypothesis was formulated, the effect of the victim-perpetrator relationship on the perception of the victim's previous reputation was examined.

Investigations of sex differences in rape-supportive views have provided inconsistent findings. For example, Giacopassi and Dull (1986) reported that females were more likely than males to reject rape beliefs which reflect negatively on women and positively on men, and Jenkins and Dambrot (1987) found that males were less likely than females to label forced intercourse as rape. However, other investigators have failed to demonstrate sex differences in rape-supportive attitudes (e.g., Acock & Ireland, 1983; Check & Malamuth, 1983). Therefore, no hypothesis was formulated.

METHOD

Experimental Design

The experiment consisted of a 3×2 between-subjects factorial with level of victim-perpetrator relationship (steady dating partners/acquaintances on a first date/strangers) and sex of participant as the independent variables.³ The dependent variables included ratings of the sex role expectations and rape-supportive beliefs which observers applied to a specific rape.

Participants

Because rape is particularly common among individuals of college age (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1984) and college students report a high inci-

³This study was part of a larger one ($3 \times 2 \times 2$) in which perceptions of a rape were compared to perceptions of a proposition.

dence of acquaintance rape (Koss et al., 1988), it was assumed that college students would be a useful sample for the examination of date and stranger rape perceptions. Accordingly, 62 female and 33 male undergraduates in a variety of classes at a New England state university served as participants.

Procedure

The study was conducted in the summer of 1988. A female undergraduate experimenter⁴ informed the participants that the investigation dealt with college students' reactions to several types of social interactions. Each participant was given a description of a rape and was asked to respond to a series of questions about it. The term, "rape," was never used. However, respondents were informed that the material might make them uncomfortable, and that, if this were to occur, they should feel free to refrain from participation. It was made clear that participation was both anonymous and voluntary.

Scenarios. The use of written scenarios in the experimental investigation of rape perceptions is consistent with the methods of previous investigators (e.g., Acock & Ireland, 1983; Check & Malamuth, 1983; Luginbuhl & Mullin, 1981) and accords with Muehlenhard and Linton's (1987) suggestion that hypothetical scenario studies can be useful in attempting to clarify the nature of date rape. In each of the three scenarios a female student forcefully said "no" to a sexual proposition by a male student. Then he ignored her protests, forced himself on her, and completed the act of intercourse. Approximately one-third of the scenarios depicted the two as steady dating partners for five months, one-third as acquaintances on a first date, and one-third as strangers.⁵

Dependent Variables. After reading one of the scenarios, participants completed a series of 11-point rating scales, from 0-10, which measured their reactions to the victim, perpetrator, and rape. In order to reduce any bias which might be introduced by using the terms, "victim" and "perpetrator," each of the ratings referred to the individuals by the names used in the scenario (Barbara and Tim). One rating was a manipulation check

⁴Although the original design specified a male and a female experimenter, due to uncontrollable circumstances, the male was not available for the administration of the study. Accordingly, the experimenter presented a very brief standard set of instructions which was hoped would mitigate against experimenter influence. However, the possibility of sex of experimenter effects should be investigated in future research.

⁵A rationale for the content of the scenarios is presented in a previous article (Bridges & McGrail, 1989) and the scenarios are available, upon request.

which assessed the degree of acquaintance between Barbara and Tim, five measured sex role expectations, and six assessed rape-supportive beliefs. In addition, because this experiment was part of a larger assessment of rape perceptions, eight questions measured variables not related to sex role expectations or rape-supportive beliefs.

The measures of sex role expectations and rape-supportive beliefs were all devised for this investigation. The previous examination of the sex role socialization analysis of rape perceptions (Check & Malamuth, 1983) assessed the relationship between participants' general sex role attitudes and their perceptions of a rape victim's reactions (i.e., her willingness, pleasure, and pain). Thus, that study did not provide a broad measure of sex role perceptions of rape which could be used in this study. In addition, previously-developed rape attitude scales (e.g., Burt, 1980; Giacopassi & Dull, 1985) measure general attitudes, rather than the tendency to incorporate rape-supportive attitudes into attributions about a specific rape. Thus, the current study required the development of new measures so that the specific sex role and rape-supportive content of observers' perceptions of a particular rape could be examined.

There were five ratings of sex role expectations. Three measured sex role aspects of the interaction presented in the scenario and included: 1) the extent to which the incident was influenced by Barbara's failure to control the situation,⁶ 2) the extent to which the incident was influenced by Tim's misunderstanding of Barbara's behavior or desires,⁶ and 3) Barbara's true desire for intercourse. These were rated from *not at all* to *a great extent*. In addition, in order to assess the observer's tendency to link victimization and/or perpetration of rape with his/her own conception of sex role, the participant was asked to rate Barbara's femininity, from *not at all feminine* to *very feminine* and Tim's masculinity, from *not at all masculine* to *very masculine*. In other words, the purpose of the last two measures was to assess the degree to which the participant attributed victims and/or perpetrators with traits which he/she believed to be stereotypical for women and men.

The six rape-supportive beliefs included four measures of the degree to which the negative aspects of the assault were minimized. Three asked the respondent to rate the extent, from *not at all* to *a great extent*, to which 1) Barbara enjoyed the intercourse, 2) this incident was a violation of Barbara's rights, and 3) Barbara will be psychologically damaged as a result of the incident. The fourth variable asked the respondent to indicate the extent to which he/she would characterize this act of intercourse as rape, from *definitely not rape* to *definitely rape*. In addition, one rating assessed the ex-

⁶In addition to their relevance here, these variables were examined in the paper on responsibility attributions (Bridges & McGrail, 1989).

Table I. Intercorrelations Among the Dependent Variables^a

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Failure to control	.27	.51	.15	.10	-.36	.19	-.23	-.30	-.27	-.03
(1)	.008	.001	ns	ns	.0004	ns	.025	.003	.01	ns
Misunderstanding		.33	.14	.21	-.30	.09	-.30	-.24	-.31	.05
(2)		.001	ns	.05	.003	ns	.004	.02	.002	ns
Victim's desire			-.07	.11	-.64	.44	-.54	-.52	-.48	-.15
(3)			ns	ns	.0001	.0001	.0001	.0001	.0001	ns
Femininity				.22	-.02	-.02	.18	-.02	.03	.29
(4)				.04	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	.008
Masculinity					-.03	.04	-.21	-.04	-.15	.13
(5)					ns	ns	.05	ns	ns	ns
Characterization										
as rape						-.47	.48	.57	.60	-.02
(6)						.0001	.0001	.0001	.0001	ns
Victim's enjoyment							-.27	-.45	-.25	-.14
(7)							.009	.0001	.02	ns
Violation								.45	.36	.00
(8)								.0001	.0004	ns
Psychological										
damage										
(9)									.47	.02
Perpetrator's									.0001	ns
problems										
(10)										
Victim's bad										-.07
reputation										ns
(11)										

^aFor each correlation the *p* value is listed below the *r*.

tent to which Tim had psychological problems, from *not at all* to *a great extent*, and another measured the characterization of Barbara's prior reputation, from *very bad* to *very good*.

RESULTS

Overview

First, in order to examine the relationships among the dependent variables, intercorrelations among all of the sex role perceptions and rape-supportive beliefs were performed, and these are presented in Table I. Then, multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAS) followed by univariate analyses (ANOVAs) of all significant multivariate effects were used to test hypotheses 1-3. In addition, ANOVAs were employed to examine both hypothesis 4 and the effect of the victim-perpetrator relationship on the victim's prior reputation. Post hoc tests were then applied to significant univariate interactions and to main effects of the victim-perpetrator relationship. Unless otherwise specified, the reported post hocs were significant at the .05 level or less, and descriptive statistics for all of the dependent variables are presented in Tables II and III.

Manipulation Check

A 3 (relationship) \times 2 (sex) ANOVA for degree of acquaintance yielded a significant main effect of victim-perpetrator relationship, $F(2,89) = 158.39, p < .0001$. The post hoc comparison of means showed that the steady dating partners ($M = 6.43$) were seen as better acquainted than the acquaintances on a first date ($M = 2.65$), who, in turn, were perceived as better

Table II. Means and Standard Deviations of Sex Role Expectations^a

Expectations	Steady date (<i>N</i> = 25)		First date (<i>N</i> = 33)		Stranger (<i>N</i> = 28)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Victim's failure to control the situation	4.44	2.90	3.76	2.98	1.96	2.46
Misunderstanding of the victim	3.40	2.81	3.61	3.22	1.75	2.19
Victim's desire for intercourse	2.00	1.76	1.36	1.65	0.32	0.72
Victim's femininity	6.56	1.26	6.64	1.92	6.75	1.97
Perpetrator's masculinity	5.84	2.13	5.88	2.93	4.93	2.43

^aRatings were made on a 0-10 scale and higher means reflect greater endorsement of sex role expectations.

Table III. Means and Standard Deviations of Rape-Supportive Beliefs^a

Expectations	Steady date (<i>N</i> = 29)		First date (<i>N</i> = 34)		Stranger (<i>N</i> = 30)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Beliefs which minimize the negative aspects of rape ^b						
Characterization as rape	8.97	1.84	9.26	1.08	9.97	0.18
Victim's enjoyment	0.76	1.33	0.44	0.96	0.30	1.32
Violation of victim's rights	9.69	0.60	9.59	0.89	10.00	0.00
Psychological damage to victim	6.66	2.38	8.21	2.01	8.43	1.81
Beliefs about the victim and perpetrator ^c						
Perpetrator's psychological problems ^d	6.86	2.96	8.27	1.64	9.45	0.93
Victim's bad reputation ^e	3.50	2.02	3.55	1.99	4.17	1.75

^aRatings were made on a 0-10 scale.

^bWith the exception of victim enjoyment, lower means reflect greater rape-supportive beliefs.

^cHigher means reflect greater endorsement of the beliefs.

^d*N*s = 29, 33, and 31, respectively.

^e*N*s = 24, 33, and 29, respectively.

acquainted than the strangers ($M = 0.10$). Further, although the sex by relationship interaction was significant, $F(2,89) = 4.42, p < .01$, post hoc tests showed that this pattern of means held for both female and male participants. Thus, the manipulation of relationship was effective.

Sex Role Expectations

Prior to analysis of the relationship (hypothesis 1) and sex (hypothesis 2) effects on sex role expectations, intercorrelations among the five sex role variables were performed. As can be seen in Table I, the intercorrelations among failure to control, misunderstanding, and victim's desire were all positive and statistically significant. Similarly, there was a significant positive correlation between victim's femininity and perpetrator's masculinity. The only other significant correlation among the five sex role expectation variables was the positive relationship between the perpetrator's masculinity and his misunderstanding of the victim. Despite the nonsignificant relationships between femininity or masculinity and the other variables, a conservative statistical approach was followed in the analysis of these hypotheses. Because these hypotheses refer to relationship and sex effects on all sex role expectations, one 3 (relationship) \times 2 (sex) MANOVA applied to all of the sex role expectations measures was used.

The MANOVA yielded significant effects of relationship, $F(10,152) = 3.12, p < .001$, and sex, $F(5.76) = 4.11, p < .002$. Univariate analyses of the relationship main effect provided support for hypothesis 1 which predicted

that the date rapes, more than the stranger rape, would be seen as extensions of traditional sex role interaction. These analyses revealed significant relationship main effects for victim failure to control the situation, $F(2,80) = 6.67, p < .002$, misunderstanding of the victim, $F(2,80) = 3.72, p < .023$, and victim desire for intercourse, $F(2,80) = 12.06, p < .0001$, but not for femininity or masculinity. Post hoc showed that participants perceived greater victim failure to control and victim desire in regard to the two date rapes than the stranger rape and greater misunderstanding in regard to the first date than the stranger rape. Further, there were no differences in the perceptions for the steady date versus first date rapes. These data can be seen in Table II.

There was some support for hypothesis 2 that males, more than females, would endorse sex role perceptions. Univariate tests of the multivariate sex effects showed that males, compared to females, perceived greater victim failure to control the situation ($M_s = 4.59$ vs. 2.75), $F(1,80) = 6.88, p < .01$, and greater victim desire for intercourse ($M_s = 1.90$ vs. 0.86), $F(1,80) = 9.73, p < .003$. However, contrary to prediction, females ($M = 6.02$) rated the perpetrator of the rape as more masculine than males ($M = 4.67$) did, $F(1,80) = 5.86, p < .018$.

Rape-Supportive Beliefs

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the minimization of the negative aspects of rape would be greatest when the perpetrator was a steady dating partner and least when he was a stranger. The four measures used to test this hypothesis (characterization of the intercourse as rape, victim's enjoyment, violation of the victim's rights, and psychological damage to the victim) showed significant intercorrelations with one another. For each measure, with the exception of victim's enjoyment, a low score reflected a rape-supportive belief. Thus, the negative correlations, seen in Table I, between victim's enjoyment and the other three variables and the positive correlations among these three indicate that observers who hold one belief which minimizes the negative aspects of rape tend to hold others as well.

In order to test the hypothesis, a 3×2 MANOVA was applied to these four beliefs which minimize the negative effects of rape. This analysis revealed main effects of relationship, $F(8,168) = 4.18, p < .0001$, and sex, $F(4,84) = 4.13, p < .004$, and a significant relationship by sex interaction, $F(8,168) = 2.06, p < .043$.

Univariate analyses yielded relationship main effects for characterization of the intercourse as rape, $F(2,87) = 11.09, p < .0001$, the victim's enjoyment, $F(2,87) = 2.99, p < .055$, violation of the victim's rights, $F(2,87)$

= 3.49, $p < .035$, and psychological damage to the victim, $F(2,87) = 7.74$, $p < .0008$. The mean ratings of these variables can be seen in Table III, and post hoc tests showed, first, that, although participants tended to strongly evaluate the assault as rape, the forced intercourse by either dating partner, compared to the stranger, was characterized less strongly as rape. Second, despite the significant relationship main effect for victim enjoyment, the comparison of means did not reach the conventional level of significance for this variable. Third, less violation of her rights was attributed to the first date than the stranger victim; and, fourth, less psychological damage was expected for the victim of steady date than either first date or stranger rape.

Univariate analyses indicated that the relationship main effects for characterization as rape and the victim's enjoyment were modified by significant relationship by sex interactions; $F(2,87) = 7.19$, $p < .001$, and $F(2,87) = 3.45$, $p < .036$, respectively. Post hoc tests showed that, for both variables, the males' perceptions, but not females', were influenced by the victim-perpetrator relationship. Females characterized the three types of rape similarly ($M_s = 9.52-9.95$) and attributed similarly low levels of enjoyment to all three victims ($M_s = .30-.38$). However, male participants characterized the forced intercourse by the steady dating partner ($M = 7.44$), compared to that by the stranger ($M = 10.00$), less strongly as rape and attributed greater enjoyment to the victim who was raped by her steady dating partner ($M = 1.78$) than to the victim of stranger rape ($M = 0.22$).

Thus, the analyses of these four rape-supportive beliefs provide partial support for the third hypothesis which predicted that beliefs about rape by a steady dating partner would be most rape-supportive and those about stranger rape would be least rape-supportive.

Hypothesis 4 stated that observers would attribute more psychological problems to the stranger rapist than the date rapists. In support of this prediction, an ANOVA yielded a significant main effect of relationship, $F(2,87) = 15.23$, $p < .0001$. As can be seen in Table III, post hoc analyses showed that the stranger was perceived to have more problems than the first date acquaintance who, in turn, was perceived to have more problems than the steady dating partner. In addition, an ANOVA tested the effects of relationship on the belief that the victim had a bad reputation and revealed no significant effects.

Although no predictions were made, the findings regarding rape-supportive beliefs showed several sex effects. In relation to beliefs which minimize rape, males, compared to females, were less likely to characterize the forced intercourse as rape ($M_s = 8.77$ vs. 9.71), $F(1,87) = 15.64$, $p < .0002$, more likely to believe that the victim enjoyed the rape ($M_s = .81$ vs. $.34$), $F(1,87) = 3.92$, $p < .051$, and less likely to expect psychological damage

to the victim ($M_s = 7.10$ vs. 8.15), $F(1,87) = 6.22$, $p < .015$. However, post hoc analyses of the relationship \times sex interaction for characterization as rape, $F(2,87) = 7.19$, $p < .001$, and victim's enjoyment, $F(2,87) = 3.45$, $p < .036$, indicated that for both measures the sex difference was significant for the rape by the steady dating partner only. Specifically, males ($M = 7.50$) were less likely than females ($M = 9.65$) to characterize the forced intercourse by the steady partner as rape; and males ($M = 1.78$) were more likely than females ($M = .30$) to attribute enjoyment to the steady date rape victim. In addition, characterization as rape showed a marginally significant sex difference ($p < .075$) for the first date rape ($M_s = 8.85$ vs. 9.52 , for males and females, respectively).

An ANOVA showed a significant sex effect for the perpetrator's psychological problems, $F(1,87) = 10.55$, $p < .002$. Females ($M = 8.70$), in comparison to males ($M = 7.36$), attributed more problems to the rapist. However, analysis of the belief that the victim's prior reputation was bad revealed no sex difference.

DISCUSSION

According to the sex role socialization theory of rape, traditional heterosexual role behaviors and rape-supportive beliefs, which develop as a result of sex role socialization, help explain the occurrence of rape, especially acquaintance rape (Check & Malamuth, 1983). In addition, it has been suggested (Check & Malamuth, 1983) that the perceptions of detached observers are similarly influenced by sex role socialization. However, previous studies of observers (e.g., Check & Malamuth, 1983; Tetreault & Barnett, 1987) examined only a limited number of perceptions and did not assess reactions to rape by a steady dating partner, a form of rape which is very common among college students (Koss *et al.*, 1988). The current investigation filled in this gap and showed that a large variety of sex role expectations and rape-supportive beliefs are incorporated into the perceptions of steady and/or first date rape more than stranger rape. Thus, these data increase the robustness of the conclusion that sex role expectations and rape-tolerant beliefs, which develop as a result of the socialization process, influence perceptions of date rape.

In regard to sex role expectations, it is not surprising that perceptions of the victim's failure to control the situation, misunderstanding between the perpetrator and victim, and the victim's desire for intercourse were emphasized in response to date more than stranger rape. Possibly, these perceptions

stem from the same sex role socialization processes which (1) lead males and females to believe that females are the gate-keepers in sexual interactions (Grauerholz & Serpe, 1985), (2) males more than females to perceive sexual intent in social situations (Abbey, 1982, 1987; Abbey & Melby, 1986; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987), and (3) females to frequently hide their real interest in sexual activity (Clark & Lewis, 1977).

It is interesting to note, moreover, that, as Table II shows, observers attributed nonsignificantly greater masculinity to the perpetrators of date than stranger rape ($p < .13$). This finding regarding perceptions parallels the conclusion of Koss and her colleagues (Koss *et al.*, 1985) that actual perpetrators of acquaintance rape may show an "oversocialized masculine belief system" (p. 991). Further, it supports the current study's other findings which show that sex role expectations are applied more strongly to date than stranger rape. Thus, regardless of the specific traits which the observer associates with masculinity, these data suggest that college students believe that a male who assaults a dating partner is more likely than his counterpart who rapes a stranger to adhere to these stereotypical characteristics. Additionally, the positive correlation between perceptions of the perpetrator's masculinity and his misunderstanding of the victim's behavior and desires suggests that this conception of masculinity involves, in part, adherence to the traditional sexual script governing heterosexual behavior.

An interesting result of this study was the similarity in sex role expectations applied to the first and steady date rapes, a finding which is consistent with reports by rape victims. In regard to victims, there is evidence that although fewer stranger, than acquaintance, victims label their experience as miscommunication, there is no difference in the percentage of casual date rape victims and victims of steady date rape who give it this label (Koss *et al.*, 1988). One explanation is that in the perception of rape, the cognitive schema of the traditional sexual script is evoked as long as the rape occurs on a date, regardless of the level of intimacy between the dating partners.

Alternatively, it is possible that, although similar sex role expectations are applied to first and steady date rape, the relative weights of these expectations may differ. The current study did not examine the perceived importance of one sex role factor compared to the others. However, observation of the means presented in Table II tentatively suggests that the victim's failure to control the situation may have been seen as more important than the perpetrator's misunderstanding of the victim in the perception of steady but not first date rape. Thus, future research might include additional sex role expectations and compare the weights given to each in relation to both first and steady date rape.

Similar to sex role expectations, the current findings show a stronger tendency to incorporate rape-supportive beliefs into perceptions of date than

stranger rape. However, the only belief associated with first date more than stranger rape was the belief that the victim's rights were not violated. On the other hand, this sample of males viewed steady date compared to stranger rape as less likely to be rape and as more enjoyable for the victim, and both females and males perceived less psychological damage to the victim of rape by a steady partner. Possibly the assumption that intercourse is normative within a close relationship works to mitigate the perceived seriousness of steady date rape.

These findings are disturbing because they indicate a perception of date rape, especially by a steady partner, which is both inaccurate and rape-supportive. Although low levels of enjoyment were associated with all of the victims, the greater enjoyment attributed to the victim of steady date rape in comparison to the others, is not realistic and may lead observers to experience less sympathy for date rape victims than for victims of stranger rape. Moreover, contrary to the observers' tendency to de-emphasize both the psychological damage felt by the victim of steady date rape and the degree of violation of rights experienced by the first date rape victim, psychological symptomatology has been shown to be similar in acquaintance and stranger rape victims (e.g., Koss *et al.*; Ruch & Chandler, 1983). Further, there is evidence that acquaintance rape victims report less recovery than stranger victims for up to three years following their attack (Katz & Burt, 1986).

In regard to sex differences, the majority of the findings suggest that males hold stronger sex role expectations and rape-supportive beliefs than females do. Consistent with the tendency for males more than females to misperceive sexual intent in social situations (e.g., Abbey, 1987), this sample of males attributed stronger desire for intercourse to the rape victim than females did. Further, they perceived greater victim failure to control the situation, suggesting that males, more than females, stereotype the role of the female as the gate-keeper. In addition, the data on rape-supportive beliefs indicate that males are more likely than females to manifest beliefs which minimize the seriousness of rape. Specifically, this sample of males, more than females, endorsed the beliefs that the assault by the steady partner was not rape and that the victim of this rape enjoyed it. Moreover, the males, compared to the females, expected less psychological damage for all of the victims.

Thus, consistent with evidence that males are more traditional than females are (e.g., McBroom, 1984), these data suggest that, in the course of sex role socialization, males are more likely than females to acquire sex role expectations which can lead to the perception of rape as an extension of typical male-female sexual interaction. Moreover, they acquire rape-supportive beliefs which influence their perceptions of the seriousness of rape, especially by a steady dating partner.

It is interesting to note that, although most of the sex role expectations and rape-supportive beliefs were endorsed more strongly by males than females, males were less likely than females to attribute psychological problems and masculinity to the perpetrator. The former finding provides tentative support for Giacobassi and Dull's (1986) suggestion that people are more likely to reject rape-supportive beliefs which reflect negatively on themselves. Moreover, as previously suggested, masculinity may involve the negative stereotype of a male who misreads a woman's behavior and desires in a sexual situation. Consequently, the stronger attribution of masculinity made by females than males is consistent with the conclusion that negative attributions are more likely in relation to the other sex.

In summary, it appears that sex role socialization has created a culture in which college students view date rape as an extension of traditional male-female sexual interaction and in which college males, in particular, accept beliefs which are conducive to an assault within a close relationship. It is suggested that if society were to move toward more egalitarian sex role socialization, the traditional sex role expectations and rape-supportive beliefs now associated with date rape would weaken and, in turn, the incidence of date rape might decrease. Indeed, Cherry (1983) contends that, in order to change societal views of rape, we should "alter the gender socialization process early enough to see changes in attitudes and behavior toward women" (p. 258).

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