

## Attributions of Responsibility for Date and Stranger Rape<sup>1</sup>

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*This study examined the effects of the victim-perpetrator relationship on college students' attributions of responsibility for rape. In addition, the rape specificity of these attributions was investigated. College females and males read one of six scenarios that depicted a rape or a proposition, and that varied according to the victim-perpetrator relationship (steady dating partners/acquaintances on a first date/strangers). Then they rated seven responsibility attributions for the rape or proposition. Results indicated that most forms of victim responsibility were stronger for the rape and proposition on a date than for the incidents between strangers, and the findings concerning the perpetrator's responsibility were mixed. The pattern of both victim- and perpetrator-responsibility attributions suggests that both a rape and proposition on a date, compared to incidents between strangers, elicit stronger sex role and sexual attributions. Moreover, male subjects, in comparison to female subjects, gave higher ratings to several responsibility attributions, and these, also, are linked to sex role and sexual considerations. Further, the data revealed that only the perpetrator-responsibility attributions were stronger for the rape than the proposition.*

The numerous investigations of responsibility attributions for rape have focused primarily on stranger rape (e.g., Acock & Ireland, 1983; Jones & Aronson, 1973; Karuza & Carey, 1984; Luginbuhl & Mullin, 1981). However, evidence that the majority of rapes are committed by acquaintances of the

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victim (Koss, Dinero, Seibel, & Cox, 1988; Russell, 1984) has been associated with some attention to the influence of the victim-rapist relationship on perceptions of responsibility. In this regard, Tetreault and Barnett (1987) found that female observers attributed greater responsibility to a victim of acquaintance rape than to a stranger-rape victim, but male observers showed the reverse pattern.

Although Tetreault and Barnett's (1987) scenario involved a victim and rapist who had previously dated a couple of times, the rape did not take place during a date. L'Armand and Pepitone (1982), on the other hand, compared responsibility attributions for date and stranger rape, and found that both females and males attributed greater blame to the victim and less to the rapist as the relationship varied from strangers to dating partners to dating partners with prior consensual sex.

The importance of examining responsibility attributions for date rape is indicated by the high incidence of this form of sexual assault. A national survey indicated that 60% of the acquaintance-rape victims on college campuses were assaulted by casual or steady dates (Koss et al., 1988). Moreover, in one smaller sample of university women, 15% reported having been subjected to unwanted intercourse on a date (Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987).

In addition to the greater frequency of date rape in comparison to stranger rape, there is reason to believe these two forms of rape may be characterized by different motives, behaviors, and perceptions. In this regard, Warshaw (1988) has suggested that heterosexual rituals, including sexual assertiveness on the part of the male and gatekeeping behaviors by the female, may play a role in date rape. Indeed, there is evidence that the victims of date rape differ from the victims of nonromantic rape in terms of their perceptions of the rape (Koss et al., 1988). For these reasons, it would be beneficial to gain a greater understanding of the differential responsibility attributions for date and stranger rape. Accordingly, the present study examined observers' attributions of responsibility for rape by a steady dating partner, an acquaintance on a first date, and a stranger.

The studies that examined the effects of the victim-rapist relationship used global measures of responsibility (L'Armand & Pepitone, 1982; Tetreault & Barnett, 1987). However, other researchers have shown that various types of blame are associated with rape and these may be differentially affected by characteristics of the rape or the observer. For example, in regard to the victim's characteristics, Luginbuhl and Mullin (1981) showed that the victim's respectability affected perceptions of blame due to chance and to the victim's character, but had no influence on perceptions of the victim's behavioral blameworthiness. Moreover, in relation to the observer's characteristics, Thornton and Ryckman (1983) found that males and females did not differ in their attributions of blame to the victim's character but that

males, in comparison to females, attributed more blame to the victim's behavior and provocative appearance.

This discussion suggests that victim blame is not a unitary variable, and that its components are not uniformly applied in all situations and by all observers. However, the various aspects of victim blame have not yet been examined within the context of acquaintance rape. Moreover, previous investigations of rapist responsibility for stranger rape (Acock & Ireland, 1983; Thornton & Ryckman, 1983), acquaintance rape (Johnson & Jackson, 1988), or a comparison of acquaintance and stranger rape (L'Armand & Pepitone, 1982) have all relied on global measures. Consequently, the current study investigated both behavioral and characterological components of victim and rapist responsibility.

Although the main purpose of this investigation was to examine the effects of the victim-rapist relationship on attributions of responsibility, a second function was to identify those responsibility attributions, if any, that are more specific to unwanted forced intercourse than to an unwanted proposition. Previous research does not indicate whether or not the parameters of rape *per se* imply certain causal attributions or whether these blame variables are attributed to less serious forms of unwanted sexual overture in addition to rape. For example, although several researchers (e.g., Karuza & Carey, 1984; Thornton & Ryckman, 1983) have shown that observers attribute some blame for rape to the victim's behavior, character, and provocative appearance, the lack of a no-rape control precludes the determination of whether these types of blame are specific to unwanted intercourse or, alternatively, are generalizable to an unwanted sexual proposition. Accordingly, in this study, for each of the three levels of relationship, the woman refused the man's sexual proposition. He then either raped her or, as the control, accepted her refusal.

A third purpose of this investigation was to clarify the inconsistent findings regarding sex differences in responsibility attributions. A number of investigators reported no sex differences in attributions of responsibility to the victim (Acock & Ireland, 1983; L'Armand & Pepitone, 1982; Shotland & Goodstein, 1983), whereas others showed that males, in comparison to females, made higher attributions of victim blame (Cann, Calhoun, & Selby, 1979; Luginbuhl & Mullin, 1981; Thornton & Ryckman, 1983). Further, although Acock and Ireland found no sex differences in rapist-blame attributions, L'Armand and Pepitone reported that females, in comparison to males, attributed more responsibility to the rapist.

In conclusion, this investigation examined the effect of the victim-perpetrator relationship on attributions of responsibility. Although several components of responsibility were examined, the absence of relevant research precluded the formulation of hypotheses regarding their relative im-

portance. However, based on the finding that greater attribution of general responsibility to the victim is associated with date or acquaintance rape in comparison to stranger rape (L'Armand & Pepitone, 1982; Tetreault & Barnett, 1987), Hypothesis 1 predicted that responsibility attributions to the victim would be stronger in the two date rapes than the stranger rape. Moreover, L'Armand and Pepitone's finding that more responsibility was attributed to the perpetrator of stranger rape than date rape led to the second hypothesis, which stated that the attribution of responsibility to the perpetrator would be stronger for the stranger rape compared to the date rapes.

A third hypothesis stemmed from evidence that victims of date rape more than stranger rape label the assault as miscommunication (Koss et al., 1988), and that both victims and perpetrators of any type of sexual assault on a date perceive the involvement of miscommunication (Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987). This hypothesis stated that either type of date rape, more than stranger rape, would be attributed to misunderstanding.

In addition to the examination of the three hypotheses, other goals of the study included the identification of rape-specific responsibility attributions and the comparison of females' and males' attributions.

## METHOD

### *Experimental Design*

The experiment consisted of a  $3 \times 2 \times 2$  between-subjects factorial with level of victim-perpetrator<sup>3</sup> relationship (steady dating partners/acquaintance on a first date/strangers), occurrence of rape (rape/proposition), and sex of subject as the independent variables, and responsibility attributions as the dependent variables.

### *Procedure*

Subjects were 122 female and 62 male summer school students who volunteered to participate during a variety of undergraduate classes. They were told by the female undergraduate experimenter that the investigation dealt with college students' reactions to several types of social interactions, and were instructed to read a description of a heterosexual encounter on cam-

<sup>3</sup>For the sake of clarity, the terms "victim" and "perpetrator" are applied to the individuals involved in the proposition as well as the rape.

pus and answer a series of question about it. The term, "rape," was never used, and subjects were informed that if any of the material made them uncomfortable, they should feel free to refrain from participation. All testing was done in the summer of 1988.

*Scenarios.*<sup>4</sup> Subjects read one of six scenarios. In each, a female student forcefully said "no" to a male student's sexual proposition. Then, for the manipulation of rape occurrence, he either ignored her protests, forced himself on her, and completed the act of intercourse (rape condition), or he accepted her refusal and did not press the issue (proposition condition). As the manipulation of level of relationship, the two were presented as steady dating partners, acquaintances on a first date, or strangers.

Similar to the scenarios used by Check and Malamuth in their examination of sexual and perceptual reactions to date vs. stranger rape (1983), the location of the two types of rape differed. However, following the format employed by those investigators, there were no differences, across conditions, in the actions of either the male or female during the rape. Moreover, care was taken so that neither the female nor the male in the different types of relationships engaged in markedly different prerape or preproposition behaviors.

The scenarios specified that the date rapes and propositions occurred in the female's room and the stranger incidents took place near her dorm. These differential locations were used in order to minimize the presence of behavioral cues that might suggest specific causes of the different types of rapes and to increase realism. Placement of the stranger rape, like the date rapes, in the victim's room would have necessitated the depiction of either obviously careless behavior on the part of the victim, i.e., opening the door to an unfamiliar male, or additional criminal behavior on the part of the perpetrator, i.e., breaking into her room. Alternatively, the placement of the date rapes, like the stranger rape, outside the victim's dorm would have created an awkward setting for a dating partner, especially a steady partner, to make a proposition and then follow it with forced intercourse. Therefore, despite the different settings for the date and stranger rapes, it was expected that the similarity in behaviors across conditions and the minimization of extraneous behavioral cues would lead subjects to formulate their attributions on the basis of the victim-perpetrator relationship.

The descriptions of the rape were identical for the two types of dating relationships, as were the descriptions of the proposition, and within each relationship condition, the rape and proposition scenarios were the same except for the rape occurrence manipulation.

<sup>4</sup>The content of the scenarios is available, upon request, from the senior author.

*Dependent Variables.* The dependent variables for this study consisted of eight 11-point rating scales (from 0 to 10), including seven measures of responsibility attributions and one check on the manipulation of the relationship. Six of the attribution ratings, as well as the manipulation check, were consistent across the rape and proposition condition, and one responsibility question pertained to the rape only. In addition, 12 questions assessed sex role expectations and rape-supportive beliefs attributed to the rape and proposition, and they serve as the focus of another paper (Bridges, 1989).

Three measures of victim responsibility reflected the emphasis in previous research on the victim's character, provocativeness, and other forms of behavior. These included attributions to her disreputable qualities, provocative behavior and/or appearance, and carelessness. The fourth measure of victim responsibility, her failure to control the situation,<sup>5</sup> was based on the theoretical assumption that rape is a reflection of an extreme form of traditional male-female sexual interaction where females serve as the gatekeepers (e.g., Burt, 1980; Cherry, 1983), and it applied to the rape condition only.

There were two measures of perpetrator responsibility. Based on previous research that employed general measures of rapist blame (e.g., Johnson & Jackson, 1988; L'Armand & Pepitone, 1982), the current study included one general question on the perpetrator's responsibility. Moreover, because it is commonly believed rapists have uncontrollable sexual urges (e.g., Giacomassi & Dull, 1986), attribution of responsibility to his excessive sex drive was assessed. The seventh dependent variable was the perpetrator's misunderstanding of the victim's behavior or desires (see footnote 5).

## RESULTS

The six responsibility questions applicable to both the rape and proposition scenarios were analyzed with a  $3 \times 2 \times 2$  (level of relationship, occurrence of rape, and sex of subject) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), and the one question tested in the rape condition only, i.e., the victim's failure to control the situation, was examined with a  $3 \times 2$  (level of relationship and sex of subject) univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA). The MANOVA yielded significant main effects of relationship [ $F(32, 256) = 9.88, p < .0001$ ], rape occurrence [ $F(16, 128) = 33.50, p < .0001$ ], and sex [ $F(16, 128) = 2.38, p < .004$ ]. Further, the interactions between rape occurrence and relationship [ $F(32, 256) = 2.56, p < .0001$ ], and rape occurrence and sex [ $F(16, 128) = 1.85, p < .032$ ], were significant. To inves-

<sup>5</sup>These variables measure sex role expectations as well as responsibility attributions. Therefore, they are also discussed in the paper dealing with sex role expectations and rape-supportive beliefs (Bridges, 1989).

**Table I.** Means for Victim-Responsibility Attributions By Rape Occurrence, Relationship, and Sex<sup>a</sup>

Condition	Disreputable qualities		Provocative-ness		Careless-ness		Failure to control <sup>b</sup>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>
Rape	90	2.82	95	2.83	95	2.38	94	3.37
Steady date	29	2.79	30	2.90	30	1.80	29	4.34
Females	20	2.50	20	2.30	20	1.75	19	3.63
Males	9	3.44	10	4.10	10	1.90	10	5.70
First date	31	3.71	34	3.41	34	2.47	34	3.71
Females	18	3.33	21	2.86	21	2.38	21	2.71
Males	13	4.23	13	4.31	13	2.62	13	5.31
Stranger	30	1.93	31	2.13	31	2.84	31	2.10
Females	21	1.95	21	2.29	21	2.62	21	2.00
Males	9	1.89	10	1.80	10	3.30	10	2.30
Proposition	86	3.27	87	3.38	89	2.26	—	—
Steady date	27	3.15	28	3.96	28	2.21	—	—
Females	20	3.30	20	3.55	20	1.90	—	—
Males	7	2.71	8	5.00	8	3.00	—	—
First date	28	3.96	28	3.39	30	2.53	—	—
Females	20	3.85	20	2.65	20	1.60	—	—
Males	8	4.25	8	5.25	10	4.40	—	—
Stranger	31	2.74	31	2.84	31	2.03	—	—
Females	20	2.45	20	1.95	20	2.45	—	—
Males	11	3.27	11	4.45	11	1.27	—	—

<sup>a</sup>Higher means reflect higher attributions.

<sup>b</sup>The proposition condition did not include this variable.

tigate these multivariate effects, univariate analyses and planned comparisons were performed. The descriptive statistics for each responsibility attribution by relationship level, rape occurrence, and sex of subject can be seen in Tables I and II.

### Manipulation Check

A three-way ANOVA for degree of victim-perpetrator acquaintance yielded one significant effect. The main effect of relationship [ $F(2, 172) = 232.94, p < .0001$ ] and planned comparisons showed that the steady dating partners ( $M = 6.40$ ) were perceived as better acquainted than the couple on the first date ( $M = 2.80$ ), who in turn were seen as better acquainted than the strangers ( $M = .13$ ).

### Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 predicted that victim-responsibility attributions would be stronger for the two date rapes than for the stranger rape. Univariate ana-

**Table II.** Means for Perpetrator-Responsibility Attributions and Misunderstanding By Relationship, Rape Occurrence, and Sex<sup>a</sup>

Condition	Responsibility		Excessive sex drive		Misunderstanding	
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>
Rape	95	9.47	94	5.61	95	2.91
Steady date	30	9.13	29	5.28	30	3.43
Females	20	9.20	19	4.63	20	2.80
Males	10	9.00	10	6.50	10	4.70
First date	34	9.38	34	6.88	34	3.59
Females	21	9.43	21	6.29	21	3.62
Males	13	9.31	13	7.85	13	3.54
Stranger	31	9.90	31	4.52	31	1.65
Females	21	9.90	21	4.14	21	1.81
Males	10	9.90	10	5.30	10	1.30
Proposition	88	7.31	87	5.57	88	4.91
Steady date	28	5.43	27	3.41	28	5.36
Females	20	5.05	19	3.26	20	5.00
Males	8	6.38	8	3.75	8	6.25
First date	29	7.21	30	6.33	30	5.67
Females	20	7.35	20	6.00	20	5.60
Males	9	6.89	10	7.00	10	5.80
Stranger	31	9.10	30	6.77	30	3.73
Females	20	9.40	20	6.40	20	3.95
Males	11	8.55	10	7.50	10	3.30

<sup>a</sup>Higher means reflect stronger attributions.

lyses of the effects of the relationship on ratings of victim responsibility yielded significant main effects of relationship for the victim's disreputable qualities [ $F(2, 164) = 4.91, p < .009$ ], her provocative behavior and/or appearance [ $F(2, 170) = 4.20, p < .017$ ], her failure to control the situation [ $F(2, 88) = 6.58, p < .002$ ], but not her carelessness; and there were no significant interactions involving relationship.

In partial support of the hypothesis, planned comparisons indicated that disreputable qualities were seen to have a significantly greater influence on the rape and proposition that occurred on a first date than on those that occurred between strangers. Similarly, provocativeness on either type of date was seen as nonsignificantly more responsible for both the rape and the proposition than provocativeness with a stranger. Moreover, strong support for the hypothesis was provided by the finding that subjects attributed the two date rapes, more than the stranger rape, to the victim's failure to control the situation. These data are presented in Table I.

### *Hypothesis 2*

Hypothesis 2 stated that the perpetrator would be attributed more responsibility when he was a stranger than a date, and the findings were



mixed. Univariate analysis of the general measure of the perpetrator's responsibility yielded a significant main effect of relationship [ $F(2, 171) = 21.83, p < .0001$ ], which was subsumed by the interaction between relationship and rape occurrence [ $F(2, 171) = 7.89, p < .0005$ ]. In support of the hypothesis, planned comparisons indicated that, although all ratings of the perpetrator's responsibility for rape were high, they were significantly higher for the stranger than for either the first-date acquaintance or steady dating partner, and responsibility attributions for the two types of dating partners did not differ from one another. For the proposition condition, the stranger was attributed more responsibility than the first date acquaintance, who in turn was attributed more responsibility than the steady dating partner. These ratings can be seen in Table II.

ANOVA of the influence of the perpetrator's excessive sex drive showed a significant main effect of relationship [ $F(2, 169) = 7.55, p < .0007$ ], and a significant interaction between relationship and rape occurrence [ $F(2, 169) = 6.92, p < .001$ ]. Planned comparisons indicated that, contrary to prediction, the first-date rape, in comparison to the stranger rape, was seen as more strongly influenced by the perpetrator's excessive sex drive. As Table II shows, the rating for the rape by the steady dating partner fell in between these two ratings and was not significantly different from either. The pattern for the proposition differed from this in that the propositions by the stranger and first-date acquaintance, in comparison to the proposition by the steady dating partner, were more strongly attributed to the perpetrator's excessive sex drive.

### *Hypothesis 3*

It was predicted that there would be greater attribution of misunderstanding for the date rapes in comparison to the stranger rape, and the main effect of relationship [ $F(2, 182) = 11.60, p < .0001$ ], provided support for this prediction. Planned comparison indicated that, for both the rape and proposition, there were higher ratings of misunderstanding for the individuals on a date than for the strangers. These ratings can be seen in Table II.

### *Comparison of Attribution for the Rape and Proposition*

Univariate main and interaction effects involving rape occurrence were examined in order to identify those responsibility attributions that were more relevant to the rape than the proposition. Of the three victim-responsibility attributions that applied to both conditions, only provocativeness showed a significant effect of rape occurrence [ $F(1, 170) = 5.42, p < .021$ ], and it indicated a stronger attribution in the proposition than in the rape condition.

Examination of perpetrator-responsibility perceptions provided some evidence for rape-specific attributions. There was a rape occurrence main effect for the general measure of the perpetrator's responsibility [ $F(1, 171) = 76.33, p < .0001$ ], and a significant interaction between relationship and rape occurrence [ $F(1, 171) = 7.89, p < .0005$ ]. Simple effects analyses of this interaction showed that at each relationship level, the male who raped was attributed more responsibility than the male who propositioned [ $F(1, 56) = 57.88, p < .0001$  (steady dating partner);  $F(1, 61) = 24.46, p < .0001$  (first date acquaintance); and  $F(1, 60) = 7.25, p < .009$  (stranger)]. These data can be seen in Table II.

Analysis of the perpetrator's excessive sex drive yielded a significant relationship by rape occurrence interaction [ $F(2, 169) = 6.92, p < .001$ ]. Simple effects tests indicated that for the steady dating partner the rape, more than the proposition, was attributed to his sex drive [ $F(1, 54) = 5.44, p < .023$ ]. However, the reverse pattern was evident for the stranger [ $F(1, 59) = 7.58, p < .008$ ] and there was no rape occurrence effect for the first-date acquaintance.

As can be seen in Table II, the main effect of rape occurrence on attributions of misunderstanding showed that it was seen to influence the proposition more than the rape.

### *Sex Differences*

There were significant sex main effects for two of the victim- and one of the perpetrator-responsibility measures. As Table I indicates, males, in comparison to females, reported higher attributions for provocativeness, regardless of rape occurrence [ $F(1, 170) = 17.37, p < .0001$ ], and higher attributions for the victim's failure to control [ $F(1, 88) = 8.28, p < .005$ ]. Moreover, as can be seen in Table II, although there was no sex difference for the perpetrator's general responsibility, males, in comparison to females, gave higher ratings to his excessive sex drive in both the rape and proposition conditions [ $F(1, 169) = 6.44, p < .012$ ].

## **DISCUSSION**

### *Responsibility Attributions for Date Rape Versus Stranger Rape*

Previous studies showed that date and nondate acquaintance rape, in comparison to stranger rape, is associated with stronger attributions of victim responsibility (L'Armand & Pepitone, 1982; Tetreault & Barnett, 1987)

and weaker attributions of rapist responsibility (L'Armand & Pepitone, 1982). Because these investigations relied on global measures of responsibility, the present study broadened our understanding of the effects of the victim-perpetrator relationship by examining specific types of responsibility attributions.

The data provide some support for the previous findings in that three of the four victim-responsibility attributions were stronger for date than stranger rape. Moreover, the general perpetrator-responsibility attribution, although not the attribution to his sex drive, was stronger for stranger rape than for either type of date rape, as predicted. However, it is important to note that the inclusion of a variety of victim- and perpetrator-responsibility attributions showed that the victim-perpetrator relationship does not have a consistent effect across measures of either victim or perpetrator responsibility.

It appears that the source of the responsibility (i.e., the victim or perpetrator) is not the key variable that differentiates between the attributions showing a stronger endorsement for date rape and those that do not. Instead, the salient factors seem to be the sex role relatedness and sex relatedness of the attributions. Specifically, those variables that deal with sex role and sexual characteristics and behaviors, regardless of the source of the responsibility, are attributed to date rape more than stranger rape. On the other hand, attributions that are not sex role or sex related are either stronger for stranger than date rape or are similar for both.

In regard to sex role attributions, this sample of college-student observers seems to have incorporated the traditional expectation that, in sexual interactions, it is the female's role to set the limits. Following from this, they believe if rape occurs on a date it is due, at least in part, to her failure to exercise adequate control. Similarly, consistent with the tendency for males to perceive more sexual intent in social situations than females (Abbey, 1982; Abbey & Melby, 1986; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987) and with the belief that women frequently hide their true interest in sexual activity (Clark & Lewis, 1977), the data suggest that these students believe the male's misunderstanding of the female's behavior or desires contributes to date rape.

The findings concerning sex-related attributions provide some evidence that the victim's provocativeness and the perpetrator's excessive sex drive were attributed more strongly to the date, in comparison to the stranger, rapes. Thus, the sexual behaviors and motives that might be expected to operate when a female and male choose to be together in a dating situation are seen more influential to the occurrence of date than stranger rape. Further, the victim's disreputable qualities were used to explain the date rapes more than the stranger rape. Although disreputable qualities do not necessarily imply loose sexual morals, there is evidence that people believe rape victims are

promiscuous and have a bad reputation (Burt, 1980). Thus, it is possible that, within the context of rape, perceivers may interpret disreputable qualities as implying socially unacceptable sexual experience.

It is noteworthy that the one victim-responsibility attribution not perceived as more applicable to date than stranger rape was careless behavior, a variable unrelated to either sex role or sexual expectations. However, although there was an attempt to present the stranger-rape victim as not engaging in any markedly careless behavior, it is possible that it was the setting, rather than the relationship, that contributed to this finding. Therefore, future research should compare the perceived carelessness of date-rape and stranger-rape victims when the settings of the rapes are more similar.

It is important to note that the other variable not attributed to date rape more than stranger rape was the perpetrator's general responsibility. Although it was rated highly for each of the rapes, this was the only measure endorsed more strongly for stranger rape than either of the two date rapes. This suggests that, when a sexual characteristic is not specified, stranger rape, more than date rape, is attributed to the perpetrator. However, the current study focused on only two measures of perpetrator responsibility and in order to extend our understanding, future research might include additional perpetrator-responsibility attributions, both related and unrelated to sex role and sex.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that the model, which has been proposed by several writers (e.g., Burt, 1980; Cherry, 1983), of rape as an extension of the traditional behaviors and motives that operate in heterosexual situations is particularly applicable to date rape. On the basis of the current sample, it appears college student observers may center their responsibility attributions for date rape, more than stranger rape, on traditional sex role and sexual expectations.

### *Rape-Specific Attributions*

The search for attributions more relevant to the rape than the proposition revealed that only the perpetrator-responsibility attributions fall into this category. Moreover, for excessive sex drive, the higher attributions for rape in comparison to the proposition is evident for only one of the three levels of victim-perpetrator relationship. Specifically, the steady dating partner's excessive sex drive was rated as a cause of the unwanted forced intercourse more than the unwanted proposition, reinforcing the conclusion that date rape is attributed, in part, to sexual factors. In addition, regardless of the relationship between the perpetrator and victim, the male who raped was viewed as more responsible than the male who propositioned. Thus, despite

the myth that women could avoid rape if they wanted to do so (Matlin, 1987), the finding that the perpetrator-responsibility, and not the victim-responsibility, attributions are applied to the rape more than the proposition provides tentative evidence that the occurrence of rape is attributed to the rapist more than to the victim. However, future research examining the relative weight of various types of perpetrator- and victim-responsibility perceptions would provide more direct information about this issue.

It is not surprising that provocativeness and misunderstanding showed the opposite pattern, and were rated higher in relation to the proposition than the rape. Because both variables are associated with traditional heterosexual interactions, it makes sense that they are perceived to influence a sexual proposition. It is possible that these behaviors are seen as conducive to a sexual overture of some type on a date but that observers add other attributions, such as the perpetrator's responsibility, to explain the occurrence of sexual assault. Indeed, Ryan's (1988) analysis of typical rape and seduction scripts written by college students showed that the female is seen as more responsible for seduction than rape, whereas the male is described as more responsible for rape than seduction.

### *Sex Differences*

Consistent with the tendency for males, more than females, to sexualize heterosexual situations (e.g., Abbey & Melby, 1986), males, in comparison to females, attributed greater responsibility for both the rape and proposition to the victim's provocativeness and the perpetrator's excessive sex drive. This suggests that males, more than females, may perceive rape, like a proposition, as a sexual act, and thus attribute it sexual causes. Moreover, the stronger tendency on the part of males, in comparison to females, to view rape as due to the victim's failure to control the situation is not surprising when we consider that males are more likely than females to endorse traditional roles for women and men (e.g., Helmreich, Spence, & Gibson, 1982; Jean & Reynolds, 1984).

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