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The Use and Opposition of Rape Myths in Prime-Time Television Dramas[1]

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The act of rape violates two deeply held values of American culture: the right to justice and the right of physical integrity. Despite this fact, thousands of women are raped each year. The victim of rape often becomes the target of blame; in one aspect or another she is held accountable for her victimization. Through the use of rape myths, which are grounded in patriarchal expectations of gender role behavior, our culture unites the apparently dichotomous opposites of the rights to justice and physical integrity. While rape myths have received extensive attention from behaviorists, their communication through the mass media has been ignored. This study focuses on the use of, and opposition to, rape myths in prime-time television dramas, as well as discusses the implications of those depictions.

Rape myths are grounded in patriarchal values and attitudes. Griffin (1981) explains the roots of patriarchy:

> And now this mind, which is so terrified of woman and nature, and of the force of eros, must separate itself from what it fears. Now it will call itself "culture" and oppose itself to woman and nature. For now culture shall become an instrument of revenge against the power of nature embodied in the image of a woman. And so now, . . . she shall be humiliated, so that the images we come to know of woman will be degraded images. (pp. 13–14)

Griffin's words capture the genesis of patriarchal thought: that moment when the inferiority of women is accepted and embedded in the unconscious. The thought, deeply buried in society's and the individual's

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psyche, becomes institutionalized in laws, myths, and cultural attitudes and values.

Such is the case with rape, the ultimate humiliation of women. Through the act of rape a man not only attacks a woman, but personifies the cultural devaluation of women. In societies in which justice and the right to physical integrity are championed, a fundamental conflict occurs among cultural values. Historically this conflict has been, and still is, resolved at the expense of women, through the development of rape myths. Myths in general — and rape myths in particular — help a culture resolve internal conflicts that otherwise are unresolvable. Rape myths allow our culture to rationalize the prevalence of rape by offering explanations for its occurrence.

To fulfill this function, a myth must be widely circulated and accepted. Such is certainly the case with rape myths. Burt states unequivocally that "many Americans do indeed believe rape myths" (1980, p. 229). This is borne out in study after study in which the acceptance of rape myths is a key variable (Burt, 1980; Burt & Albin, 1981; Check & Malamuth, 1983). It is additionally apparent in personal accounts of rape victims, such as the Illinois schoolteacher who was dismissed in 1982 on the grounds that "she must have done something to invite the attack, [so she would be] a bad influence on her students" (Delloff, 1984, p. 355). It is a sad comment on our society that we so easily and willingly blame the victim for being raped, or excuse the actions of the rapist, and thereby continue the attack against her.

RAPE MYTHS

Burt defines rape myths as "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists" (1980, p. 217). Examples of rape myths are "she asked for it" or "she wanted it." Brownmiller (1975) was one of the first to explicate and dismantle rape myths as part of a groundbreaking study that presented a detailed historical, cultural, and sociological account of rape. This landmark text asserted rape was not an issue of sex but of power, of a man exercising control over a woman. Since the publication of this book, many studies have been undertaken to attempt to understand the nature of rape myths, and of their effects on victims, society, and social institutions such as the judicial system.

Burt (1980) found compelling evidence that suggests a strong relationship between gender role stereotyping and attitudes toward rape victims in that individuals who hold "traditional" beliefs regarding the roles of women and men also tend to accept rape myths. Check and Malamuth

(1983) discovered males were more likely than females to believe rape myths. Burt also discovered the level to which individuals accept personal violence is a strong predictor of rape myth acceptance. This evidence suggests that the nature of rape myths is, in part, interwoven with cultural stereotypes of "ideal" behavior for women and men. Brownmiller (1975) asserted rape myths also have a profound effect on victims, causing many to fail to report the crime because of the possible accusations levelled against them.

Finally, rape myth acceptance also determines whether or not an individual labels a situation as "real rape." Burt and Albin found "higher rape myth acceptance and a greater tendency to believe that the victim acted in some way to precipitate the assault reduce[s] the probability that [the act] will be labelled a rape" (1981, p. 225). These same results were replicated by Check and Malamuth, who found that individuals who accepted gender role stereotypes tended to hesitate "about defining the situation as rape" (1983, p. 353). The implications are clear for a rape that actually reaches the trial stage: jurors who accept rape myths will be less likely to accept that rape occurred. Indeed, friends and relatives, whom the victim might otherwise depend upon for support, may tend to dismiss the attack if they hold traditional attitudes. Clearly the acceptance of rape myths has a profound effect on individuals and society.

Acceptance of rape myths is based in patriarchy, a system of beliefs that fundamentally asserts the supremacy of the male. As Griffin theorizes, under patriarchy women personify nature (eros, sexuality), and through women, nature becomes base and the subject of control. Further, somewhere in the patriarchal thought process another split occurs that further categorizes women as either "virgin" or "whore." Virgins are unaware of their power of nature, are "without sexual knowledge" (Griffin, 1980, p. 21). From this notion of woman developed the gender role stereotype of kindness, passivity, dependence, and nurturance. Whores, however, are patriarchally defined as having sexual knowledge, and use their sexuality to manipulate men. These women, devalued by patriarchy, behave independently of gender role stereotypes. These cultural stereotypes of women are reflected in rape myths that assert only "bad" women are raped. In other words, women who are "whores" (by the patriarchal definition) or who are not passive or dependent, are the only women who are raped.

Conversely, patriarchal men represent culture and civilization, they are a "step above" nature. While men begin life as nature's creatures, they learn to become "better" than nature, and learn to control it. Controlling nature is translated, again, into gender role expectations; men are expected to be unemotional, detached, independent, and dominant.

Given that males are "naturally" dominant and women are "naturally" submissive, according to patriarchal notions, and women and men are socialized to behave in this manner, it should not be surprising to find these roles acted out in a particularly aggressive way: rape. Yet the act of rape conflicts with our social valuation of justice and physical integrity, so how does our culture resolve the opposing values of male domination vs. justice? The answer seems to lie in the development of rape myths, which remove responsibility for the rape act from the rapist and place it on the victim.

Indeed, Burt asserts the function of rape myths "is to deny or reduce perceived injury or to blame the victims for their own victimization" (1980, p. 217). Myths that deny or reduce injury generally take four basic forms: the suggestion the victim either "asked for it," "wanted it," "lied about it," or "was not really hurt" by the rape.

One myth that reduces or denies injury focuses on the victim as responsible for the attack, and claims that the victim "asked for it." Something she did provoked a man to rape her (Burt, 1980; Burt & Albin, 1981; Williams & Holmes, 1981). That "something" she did was either her behavior, being in the "wrong" place, or wearing the "wrong" clothes, each of which presupposes that there is a "right" way for women to dress and behave, and a "right" place for them to be. For instance, women who have "an attitude" (meaning they behave independently) are "asking" to be raped — to be controlled and "put in their place." Women who allow themselves to be kissed or "petted" are "asking" to be raped, since they clearly have sexual knowledge and, the thought process goes, it is not the man's fault if she turns him on. Women who go to bars, or walk alone at night, are in the "wrong" place for a "proper" woman. When a woman in New Bedford, Massachusetts, was gang-raped in a bar, community members argued "the woman was at fault because 'she had no business being in a bar; she should have been home with her kids'" (Delloff, 1984, p. 355). Lastly, a woman's clothing may be viewed as provocation for rape, such as wearing short shorts, miniskirts, high heels, or not wearing a bra, because only "improper" women (e.g., "whores") wear these items. In each instance of "asking for it," the victim does not conform to cultural expectations for dress or behavior. This refusal sets her apart from society, and therefore places her beyond any support that society may provide.

Unfortunately, many victims take this myth to heart by questioning their own responsibility for the attack. Often the victim wonders what it was *she* did to provoke the rape. Brownmiller reports "rape victims agonize afterward in an effort to uncover what it was in their behavior, their manner, their dress that triggered this awful act against them" (1975, p. 347). This myth alone teaches both society and the victim to question her responsibility, and thereby the act of rape.

As with asserting the victim "asked for it," the myth that women want to be raped is pervasive in our culture. This idea returns to the patriarchal belief in gender role expectations of female passivity and male dominance. The woman *wants* to be dominated and controlled. Brownmiller explains that "rape is an act that men do in the name of their masculinity, [so] it is in their interest to believe that women also want rape done, in the name of femininity" (1975, p. 346).

The notion women want to be raped leads to two corollary myths associated with this alleged desire: no woman can be raped against her will, and women never really mean no. The former suggests any healthy woman can get away from her attacker if she *really* wants to, thus insinuating that many rape victims wanted to be attacked. The latter asserts women may say no, but they *really do want* to be raped. Again, cultural role expectations come into play with this myth of desire for rape. Most obviously, the myth reaffirms the cultural stereotype of the female who needs a man to tell her what she wants or needs. Second, this attitude toward the rape victims reaffirms patriarchal views of woman-as-whore.

The myth that suggests women "want" to be raped is defended by claims women enjoyed being raped. Even social science research has misled by using this myth in asserting many rape victims actually experienced heightened sexual stimulation during rape, and "the fear rape victims feel certainly adds to their responsiveness" (Russell, 1979, p. 221). This myth returns us to patriarchal notions of women desiring male domination, as well as the belief that rape is an act of sex rather than of violence.

Another myth that blames the victim is the "rape lie," which argues that the woman consented to sexual intercourse, but changed her mind afterward and decided to "cry rape." Again this myth, like all rape myths, shifts responsibility from the rapist to the victim. Further, this myth focuses on the woman as vindictive, trying to blame the innocent man.

Finally, another myth suggests that the woman really was not hurt by the attack. This idea suggests the rape was "merely" a form of sexual intercourse, except the woman did not consent. This myth unilaterally dismisses any emotional or mental repercussions for the victim or, at best, judges her as unimportant. Indeed, some researchers have concluded "American women can perhaps take some comfort in the *fact* that . . . neither the actual assault nor the aftereffects may be as traumatic as had been feared" (Russell, 1979, p. 221, emphasis mine). Here a traditionally credible source legitimates the myth that women are not really hurt by rape.

This myth supports patriarchal beliefs in two ways: first, "culture" denies the importance and/or presence of nature by denying emotional responses to rape. Patriarchal values denigrate the importance of emotion;

culture/male is more valued, in part, because emotion is removed from behavioral expectations. Second, this myth inherently asserts sexual intercourse, being a natural function, does not hurt nature/female, despite the fact it is particularly aggressive and against the woman's will. This suggests women are perceived as sexual in nature and, therefore, *any* form of sexual intercourse is acceptable. It further suggests that controlling and dominating women — even through violence — is acceptable. The value placed on physical integrity is protected by a myth that asserts that the act of rape does not really damage that integrity.

While rape myths are widely believed, there are indications rape myths are finding some opposition. Feminists have been outspoken about refuting rape myths (Brownmiller, 1975). Studies indicate people who do not accept gender role stereotypes are more likely to refute rape myths (Burt, 1980; Check & Malamuth, 1983). The opposition of rape myths is important since it represents a greater sensitivity to the victim, as well as an understanding of the cultural devaluation of women. Opposition to rape myths in general indicates an individual who understands myths function both to denigrate women and shift responsibility for the attack from the rapist to the victim. People who refute rape myths place the blame where it belongs: on the rapist.

The pervasiveness of rape myths can be examined through their use in television dramas. Once considered a taboo subject for discussion, the act of rape has come under intense scrutiny in recent decades. One area in which this subject is examined is the mass media and, in particular, television. Rape has become an acceptable conflict for plot development in dramatic programs. These dramas serve a purpose beyond entertainment. They also serve as a barometer of cultural attitudes. Tuchman asserts the content of the mass media should be studied as myths, "ways of seeing the world that resonate with the conscious mind and the unconscious passions that are embedded in, expressive of, and reproductive of social organizations" (1979, p. 541). As such, television programs may be viewed as vehicles through which cultural values and attitudes are absorbed and redistributed. As Fiske explains, television serves "as a cultural agent, particularly as a provoker and circulator of meanings" (1987, p. 1). Television, then, functions as a reflection of our culture.

The content analysis answered several questions. First, how often were rape myths suggested or opposed? Which rape myths occur most frequently? Who uses or opposes rape myths? For example, does sex influence the use or opposition of rape myths? Research indicates men tend to believe rape myths more than women (Check & Malamuth, 1983). Do the characters in television dramas reflect these beliefs? And does the type of relationship (acquaintance vs. stranger) between the victim and the rapist

influence the use or opposition of rape myths? These questions were examined systematically through the content analysis of television depictions.

METHOD

The data base for this study was a purposive sample of prime-time television dramas. The sample was limited to dramatic programs that aired during the 1980s for two reasons. First, it has only been during the last decade that storylines focused explicitly on the act of rape and its ramifications. This fact is inherently related to the sociocultural emergence of rape as a public issue. Second, the length of the period was necessary to generate a large enough sample; a random sample of rape storylines would not have yielded an adequate data base on which to draw conclusions. In addition to providing a relatively large data base, the purposive selection of prime-time dramas produced a sample reflective of several programs, subgenres, and networks, thereby increasing the confidence that could be placed in the conclusions.

The sample was restricted to prime-time programs due to the fact this time period garners the largest numbers of television viewers. Television dramas were used for three reasons: they are regularly scheduled programs that draw steady viewers (unlike made-for-TV movies), they are generally perceived to be more "realistic" in their storylines than situation comedies, and TV dramas often use social issues as elements of their storylines. Twenty-six storylines were collected.

The coding questionnaire focused on the use and opposition of four rape myths: she "asked for it," she "wanted it," she "lied about it," and she "wasn't really hurt" by the attack. For each myth, four questions were asked: Is the myth suggested? If so, by whom? Is the myth opposed? If so, by whom? Rape myths were coded according to all characters' talk. Every mention of a rape myth was coded. In some instances one character attributed a rape myth to another character, which was coded.

The recording unit for these programs was a rape. The context unit was a storyline. A storyline was defined as having a narrative structure including a conflict. A storyline was not confined to a single episode. In fact, three storylines were presented over the course of several episodes.

A subsample of 20% of the storylines collected was subjected to tests for intercoder reliability. The coder received approximately one hour of instruction prior to coding. Intercoder reliability tests revealed 81% reliability between coders.

The final step in the content analysis was the analysis of the data based on appearance and frequency of categories. The frequencies of re-

sponses were subjected to chi-square calculations to determine whether the differences in frequencies of categories were statistically significant. Because the research explores an area that has not been previously investigated, the level of significance adopted was .05.

Results in several of the categories are reported in percentages, rather than chi-square values. This occurred for one of two reasons. First, in some instances the expected frequencies were too small, thereby violating the assumption of the chi-square test. Second, in some instances the chi-square was not appropriate. This statistical formula assumes exclusive coding in categories. However, in some categories multiple coding was necessary, which made the test inappropriate. For instance, the total number of suggestions and oppositions made by women and men were coded for each storyline. Since each usually occurred more frequently than once during each storyline, the figures represent greater totals than 26.

Finally, 26 rape victims were presented in the storylines. The characters represented a range of ethnicities, ages, and socioeconomic levels. Appendices 1 and 2 provide a breakdown of television programs, and victim's demographic information.

THE USE AND OPPOSITION OF RAPE MYTHS IN PRIME-TIME DRAMAS

The content analysis revealed 1.54 rape myth types occurred during the average storyline, meaning the average storyline represented more than one of these myth types. This analysis does not include the total number of times a rape myth was used. In fact, an examination of the actual suggestions of rape myths reveals they occurred 132 times in the 26 incidents of rape, averaging 5.08 uses per storyline. Thus, this suggests some rape myths occurred repeatedly in a storyline.

One rape myth type that reduces or denies injury focuses on the victim, and claims she "asked for it." This myth was used in 46% of the storylines (see Table I). For instance, one TV victim was accused of "asking" for it because she accepted a ride home from an employee, and then allowed him into her home to use the phone. Another TV victim was accused of asking for it because she went to the hotel room of her date. Yet another TV victim was accused because she allowed her date to kiss her goodnight. In each instance of "asking for it," the victim did not conform to cultural expectations for dress or behavior. This refusal set her apart from society, and therefore places her beyond any support which society may provide. It further relieved the rapist of his responsibility.

Table I. Frequency of Suggestion and Opposition of "Asking"

	Observed	Expected	Total
Suggested			
Yes	12 (46.0)	13.0	12
No	14 (54.0)	13.0	14
Total	26 (100.0)		26[a]
Suggested by			
Female	18 (51.0)		
Male	17 (49.0)		
Total	35 (100.0)[b]		
Opposed			
Yes	10 (38.0)	13.0	10
No	16 (62.0)	13.0	16
Total	26		26[c]
Opposed by			
Female	19 (65.5)		
Male	10 (34.5)		
Total	29 (100.0)[b]		

[a] $\chi^2 = .5$, $df = 1$, ns.
[b] No chi-squares were reported because multiple coding was possible.
[c] $\chi^2 = 1.38$, $df = 1$, ns.

Unfortunately, many victims take this myth to heart by questioning their own responsibility for the attack. This was clearly evidenced by one TV victim who revealed "I feel like I've done something wrong," or another who cried "What did I do? What did I do?" This myth alone teaches both society and the victim to question her responsibility, and thereby the act of rape.

It is interesting to note females and males were almost equal in their accusations that the victim "asked" for the rape in TV dramas (see Table I). This suggests the degree to which this myth is accepted by both women and men. Further, this myth was opposed in only 38% of the storylines. Although it was suggested equally by women and men, it was opposed more frequently by women (65.6%) than men (34.5%). To oppose the assertion that a victim "asked" to be raped is to recognize she was not responsible for the violent actions of someone else. Further, it recognizes women should be allowed to express their individuality without fear of retribution from either an attacker or society. This suggests women are less accepting of the assertion a victim "asks" to be raped.

The conclusion TV women both assert and oppose the rape myth of "asking" for the assault appears contradictory; women both use and oppose this myth. Yet this result is indicative of two cultural elements. First, it indicates there are both patriarchal women who accept gender stereotyping

Table II. Frequency of Suggestion and Opposition of "Wanting"

	Observed	Expected	Total
Suggested			
Yes	11 (42.0)	13.0	11
No	15 (58.0)	13.0	15
Total	26 (100.0)		26[a]
Suggested by			
Female	13 (28.2)		
Male	33 (71.8)		
Total	46 (100.0)[b]		
Opposed			
Yes	10 (38.0)	13.0	10
No	16 (62.0)	13.0	16
Total	26		26[c]
Opposed by			
Female	22 (76.0)		
Male	7 (24.0)		
Total	29 (100.0)[b]		

[a] $\chi^2 = .62$, $df = 1$, ns.
[b] No chi-squares were reported because multiple coding was possible.
[c] $\chi^2 = 1.38$, $df = 1$, ns.

and rape myths (Krulewitz & Payne, 1978; Krulewitz & Nash, 1979; Luginbuhl & Mullin, 1981), as well as women who reject these androcentric ideals. Second, it reveals the opposing viewpoints in a cultural discussion of the issue: rape from women's point of view (Fiske, 1987).

The frequent use of this myth reinforces the belief women are responsible for the rape. The use of this myth also supports the stereotyped expectations of the "proper" way for women to behave. Transgressions against culturally determined propriety result in punishment. Women who do not behave "properly" get what they "asked" for. Therefore, rape is "just" punishment for these women.

As with asserting the victim "asked for it," the myth women want to be raped is culturally pervasive. This myth reminds us of the patriarchal notions of women desiring male domination, as well as the belief that rape is an act of sex rather than of violence.

In 42% of the storylines it was suggested the victim wanted to be raped (see Table II). One of the TV victims was a police detective whose boss asked her where her gun was during the assault. The implication was, if she really did not want to be raped, she could have used her weapon. Another TV victim was attacked by a man who, without her permission, had read her diary, which included fantasies of sexual encounters with him.

Table III. Frequency of Suggestion and Opposition of "Lying"

	Observed	Expected	Total
Suggested			
Yes	10 (38.0)	13.0	10
No	16 (62.0)	13.0	16
Total	26 (100.0)		26[a]
Suggested by			
Female	13 (32.5)		
Male	27 (67.5)		
Total	40 (100.0)[b]		
Opposed			
Yes	8 (31.0)	13.0	8
No	18 (69.0)	13.0	18
Total	26		26[c,d]
Opposed by			
Female	12 (60.0)		
Male	8 (40.0)		
Total	20 (100.0)[b]		

[a] $\chi^2 = 1.38$, $df = 1$, ns.
[b] No chi-squares were reported because multiple coding was possible.
[c] $\chi^2 = 3.84$, $df = 1$, $p = .05$.
[d] Significant.

In response to her accusation of rape, he replied "she wanted it, . . . , just the way I gave it to her. She wanted it."

It should not be too suprising, given the research findings of Check and Malamuth (1983) that male TV characters accounted for 71.8% of the use of the myth of "wanting" rape (see Table II). This fact represents the functional ability of the myth to relieve rapists of their responsibility. Conversely, TV women represented 76.0% of the oppositions to the myth, which replaced blame on the rapist and reasserted the fact women do not want to be attacked. Refuting the victim "wanted" the rape is indicative of an awareness that women do not want to be brutalized or controlled. Moreover, it recognizes women who are raped lose control over the situation, their bodies, and the ability to have their decisions respected. It represents a clear understanding the victim could not stop the attack.

Another myth that blames the victim is the rape lie, which argues that the woman consented to sexual intercourse, then changed her mind afterward and decided to "cry rape." This rape myth was used infrequently in prime-time television dramas. It was suggested the victim lied about the assault in only 38% of the storylines (see Table III). However, in 67.5% of the instances in which this rape myth was suggested, it was done so by a male character. As one male defense attorney put it,

Table IV. Frequency of Suggestion and Opposition of "Not Hurt"

	Observed	Expected	Total
Suggested			
Yes	7 (27.0)	13.0	7
No	19 (73.0)	13.0	19
Total	26 (100.0)		26[a,b]
Suggested by			
Female	2 (18.2)		
Male	9 (81.8)		
Total	11 (100.0)[c]		
Opposed			
Yes	5 (19.0)	13.0	5
No	21 (81.0)	13.0	21
Total	26		26[b,d]
Opposed by			
Female	6 (86.0)		
Male	1 (14.0)		
Total	7 (100.0)[c]		

[a] $\chi^2 = 5.54$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$.
[b] Significant.
[c] No chi-square was reported because multiple coding was possible.
[d] $\chi^2 = 9.84$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$.

> Does that mean that this woman was lying? Not really. She is convinced that what she told you is true. If she clings to an illusion, it's because the memory of not simply consenting to sexual relations with the defendant, but *inviting* them, is so painful that she now seeks to extricate herself from its grip. The truth is, she's not lying. She's remembering the only way she can.

Through these statements, the defense attorney argues the guilt that this victim feels for consenting to the "sex" is so overwhelming that she not only "lies" about the rape, but deludes herself about the "true" circumstances of its commission. The attorney paints a horribly pathetic picture of the victim — not because she was raped, but because she cannot admit her own "desires."

When the rape myth of lying is opposed, it reveals an individual who accepts a woman's word as honest. There is no doubt about her veracity. It also reveals an understanding that a woman is not a man's property, and she is not motivated to salvage her reputation as undamaged "goods." The victim must endure legal and medical proceedings that are so repugnant that there is no reason to lie.

While the myth was infrequently used, it similarly was infrequently opposed (see Table III). In 60% of the instances in which this rape myth was opposed, it was resisted by a female character. Often the opposition came in the form of putting the experience of the victim in perspective.

The consequences of rape are too unpleasant for a woman to lie about it. No woman would choose to go through the experiences explained by a female prosecuting attorney:

> If she wasn't raped, what possible motivation could she have to say she was? So she could experience the fun of an ER room, getting probed by a speculum? So she could furnish vaginal fluid to crime labs, and enjoy the thrill of a police line-up? Not to mention what a good time it is to come into these courtrooms and be portrayed as a whore . . . .

This and other similar monologues functioned to counter the myth women lie about being raped by arguing that victims have no reason to lie; they have nothing to lose by telling the truth. They have already lost their self-control, self-esteem, and their ability to trust not only others but themselves as well.

Finally, one myth suggests the woman was not hurt by the attack, the rape was "merely" a form of sexual intercourse, an assertion that dismisses the mental or emotional repercussions the victim experiences. This myth was used infrequently in television representations (see Table IV). In fact, this myth was asserted significantly less frequently than expected ($\chi^2 = 5.54$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). As with most other rape myths, it was a male character who most often suggested the victim was not hurt, representing 81.8% of the assertions.

This myth was most frequently suggested through the claim that no physical evidence of a rape was present. As two detectives discussed a rape victim, the male claimed the rapist "didn't leave a mark on her," to which the female detective replied "at least none you can see." The male detective responded that physical marks are "the only kind that count." Emotional scars therefore are immaterial and unimportant. Even caring individuals fall into the cultural belief that only physical injuries matter. One TV victim's former boyfriend told her "Thank God you weren't hurt."

When it was suggested the victim "was not really hurt," women opposed the assertion in 86% of the instances (see Table IV). When someone refutes this assertion, they indicate an understanding of the tremendous emotional and physical pain the victim endures. In response to the man who thanked God the victim wasn't hurt, she said "I was raped. I *am* hurt." The present tense in her assertion that "I *am* hurt" reinforced the fact the pain and suffering of the rape continued long past the actual attack. Indeed, Vernon and Best (1983) reveal some victims bear emotional scars from the rape for years afterward.

The suggestion of rape myths occurred more frequently when the victim was raped by an acquaintance (see Table V). Data revealed a significant relationship between stranger/acquaintance rape and whether the victim was accused of "asking for it" ($\chi^2 = 8.34$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$). Further, in instances of acquaintance rape the victim was significantly more likely to be accused

Table V. Frequency of Type of Rape and Use of Rape Myths

	Stranger		Acquaintance		
	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected	Total
"Asked for"	1 (8.4)	6.0	11 (91.6)	6.0	12 (100.0)[a,b]
"Wanted"	1 (9.0)	5.5	10 (91.0)	5.5	11 (100.0)[b,c]
"Lied"	1 (10.0)	5.0	9 (90.0)	5.0	10 (100.0)[b,d]
"Not hurt"	1 (17.0)		6 (83.0)		7 (100.0)[e]

[a] $\chi^2 = 8.34$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$, 14 instances were unknown and were not reported in the total.
[b] Significant.
[c] $\chi^2 = 7.36$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$, 15 instances were unknown and were not reported in the total.
[d] $\chi^2 = 6.40$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$, 16 instances were unknown and were not reported in the total.
[e] A chi-square was not reported because the expected was too low.

of "wanting it" than victims of stranger rape ($\chi^2 = 7.36$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$). Victims of acquaintance rape were significantly more likely to be accused of lying than stranger rape victims ($\chi^2 = 6.4$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). When it was suggested the victim was not really hurt, 83.0% of those suggestions were made to victims of acquaintance rape, and 17.0% to victims of stranger rape. Clearly the relationship between the victim and the attacker prior to the rape had some bearing on the likelihood that particular rape myths would be used against her. In television depictions of rape, there is a clear relationship between the use of particular rape myths and specific elements of the rape.

These results are disturbing, for they suggest women are more responsible for the attack when it involves someone they know. Not only are they responsible for monitoring their own behavior, but victims are held responsible for making bad judgments about with whom to be acquainted and are expected to monitor the behavior of those acquaintances.

Yet as with the suggestion of rape myths, the opposition of rape myths also occurred more frequently when the victim was attacked by someone she knew (see Table VI). When the rape myth of "asking" for it was opposed, it significantly more likely involved acquaintance rape rather than stranger rape ($\chi^2 = 6.4$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). Similarly, when "wanting it" was opposed, it was significantly most likely acquaintance rape ($\chi^2 = 6.4$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). When the myth of lying was opposed, 87.5% of the oppositions were directed toward victims of acquaintance rape. Finally, when the myth of "not really being hurt" was opposed, 80% of the resistance involved acquaintance rape.

Opposition to these particular myths did not occur as frequently as their suggestion. However, occasional resistance functioned to recognize

Table VI. Frequency of Type of Rape and Opposition of Rape Myths

	Stranger		Acquaintance		
	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected	Total
"Asked for"	1 (10.0)	5.0	9 (90.0)	5.0	10 (100.0)[a,b]
"Wanted"	1 (10.0)	5.0	9 (90.0)	5.0	10 (100.0)[b,c]
"Lied"	1 (12.5)		7 (87.5)		8 (100.0)[d]
"Not hurt"	1 (20.0)		4 (80.0)		5 (100.0)[d]

[a]$\chi^2 = 6.4$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$, 16 instances were unknown and were not reported in the total.
[b]Significant.
[c]$\chi^2 = 6.4$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$, 16 instances were unknown and were not reported in the total.
[d]Chi-square s were not reported because the expected s were too low.

that, regardless of the prior relationship between the victim and the rapist, victims are not responsible for the rape.

CONCLUSIONS

The rape myths of "asking" for it, "wanting" it, "lying" about it, and "not being hurt" were used extensively in the 26 rape storylines. Overall, rape myths were used an average of 5.08 times per storyline, while they were opposed only 3.27 times per storyline.

The overuse of rape myths in prime-time television dramas reinforces the belief women are responsible for the rape, not men. Their use also appeals to cultural attitudes rooted in patriarchy. They reinforce the belief that specific behaviors are expected of women, and the failure of women to conform to these expectations results in the "just" punishment of rape. They strengthen the perception of rape as essentially sexual in nature.

In the final analysis, the television depictions of rape reveal much about our cultural attitudes toward the subject. It is apparent, not only from television portrayals but from research as well, that our culture tends to blame the victim for her rape. Traditional values, based in patriarchy, shroud the act of rape in shame and misconceptions. Only in the past two decades have feminist writers and researchers revealed the truth about rape and its victims. This study revealed those truths are beginning to find a stronger voice in television depictions of rape, but we have much further to go.

Indeed, there is much research yet to be done to understand how rape is depicted on television. Continuing research involves the study of rape victims, rapists, and the rape event in prime-time dramas, in addition to rape myths. Soap operas, broadcast journalism, print journalism, and

motion pictures also deserve scrutiny for the manner in which they present rape. The more we understand how the mass media represent attitudes toward rape, the better prepared we are to cope with this attack against women.

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Appendix 1. Television Programs Used in Content Analysis (by Victim's Name)

1. Nun (name unknown), *Hill Street Blues,* 9/30/82
2. Duane Patterson, *Cagney & Lacey,* 3/18/85
3. Odette, *Miami Vice,* 11/29/85
4. Odette, *Miami Vice,* 11/29/85 (was raped twice)
5. Jenny Bard, *Cagney & Lacey,* 10/27/86
6. Nameless victim, *L.A. Law,* 12/4/86
7. Sara Jones, *Cagney & Lacey,* 12/15/86
8. Lori Abrams, *L.A. Law,* 3/26/87
9. Fran Winston, *L.A. Law,* 3/26/87
10. Tracy Simmons, *L.A. Law,* 8/6/87
11. Carmen Carillo, *L.A. Law,* 11/12/87
12. Christine Cagney, *Cagney & Lacey,* 1/15/88, 4/5/88
13. Marcia Jennings, *L.A. Law,* 11/3/88

Appendix 1. Continued

14. Norma Hysler, *L.A. Law,* 11/17/88
15. Megan Penny, *L.A. Law,* 5/14/88
16. Wanda Havens, *L.A. Law,* 3/30/89
17. Rachel Barnes, *Jake and the Fatman,* 9/20/89
18. Bonita Claussen, *Mancuso, FBI,* 10/19/89
19. Althea Tibbs, *In the Heat of the Night,* 10/24/89
20. Marcie Jones, *Island Son,* 10/24/89
21. Tina, *The Top of the Hill,* 11/9/89
22. Judy Hoffs, *21 Jump Street,* 11/13/89
23. Karen, *21 Jump Street,* 11/13/89
24. "Older woman," *21 Jump Street,* 11/13/89
25. Amanda Michaels, *Knot's Landing,* 11/30/89, 12/7/89, 12/14/89
26. Allison Gottlieb, *L.A. Law,* 1/4/90, 1/11/90, 1/18/90

Appendix 2. Rape Victim Demographic Information

Race	
White	17
Black	4
Hispanic	2
Asian	0
Other	1
Unknown	2
Total	26
Age	
0-15	2
16-30	14
31-45	9
46-60	0
Older	0
Unknown	1
Total	26
Socioeconomic level	
Lower	3
Middle	19
Upper	1
Unknown	3
Total	26