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Men's and Women's Perceptions of Non-Consensual Sexual Intercourse[1]

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This paper examines the reactions of college men and women (primarily white) to scenarios depicting non-consensual intercourse between men and women with varying levels of prior intimacy. Women were more likely than men to consider the scenarios unacceptable, and the gender difference increased with the level of prior intimacy between the victim and the offender in the scenario. Respondents who reported knowing a rape victim were also more likely to consider the scenarios unacceptable, and this effect was significantly larger for men. We consider the implications of these results for understanding the role of salience of sexual assault and self-interest in shaping men's and women's reactions to non-consensual intercourse.

In the last ten years or so, people in the United States have begun to question and challenge the ways in which we perceive rape. Many states have broadened their statutes on sexual assault to include various types of non-consensual sexual intercourse between two individuals. The most conservative definitions still exclude any mention of marital rape and demand evidence of force by the offender and resistance by the victim. But the most liberal statutes define as criminal any non-consensual intercourse between any two people, regardless of the gender of the victim or the offender and regardless of the previous relationship between the two parties. The acceptability and unacceptability of men's sexual behavior remains con-

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tested terrain. Prevalence studies (Koss 1985; Koss, Gidycz and Wisniewski 1987) point not only to the high incidence of rape in the United States, but also highlight the problem of defining rape for the woman who has experienced sexual violence. For example, Warshaw (1988:26) found that 25% of the college women in her sample reported a sexual experience that fit a liberal legal definition of rape (non-consensual intercourse). However, "...only 26% of women whose sexual assault met the legal definition of rape thought of themselves as rape victims."

Prevalence studies suggest that subjective interpretations of what constitutes rape and unacceptable sexual behavior are contested terrain. Given that such interpretations define the context in which public policy surrounding rape is developed and in which individual men and women understand their sexual experiences, it is crucial to explore the factors that shape interpretations of rape. Furthermore, date rape on college campuses has become a site of particular controversy. College administrators struggle with safety issues and information dissemination while trying to attract enrollment. Students are involved in sexual harassment/assault prevention programs and contemporary consciousness raising groups. On campuses such as Antioch, there are movements to codify how consent is orchestrated. Date rape on college campuses is perceived by some as epidemic (Koss 1985; Warshaw 1988; Sanday 1990) and by others as exaggerated (Roiphe 1993). Issues such as what constitutes consent and coercion are hotly debated by both men and women. Even among feminists controversy revolves around such issues as women being portrayed as victims or survivors and the degree to which women are responsible for their own rape prevention. Understanding consent, coercion, and definitions of rape is complex. In this paper, we use the opinions of college students to examine gender differences in perceptions of non-consensual sexual intercourse. We report on data collected from a sample of college students who were asked to rate the acceptability of a man's behavior in a series of scenarios depicting non-consensual intercourse. We also consider responses to a series of rape stereotype items, as another indicator of beliefs about rape. We address the role of respondent gender as a factor shaping interpretations, replicating the findings of many previous studies. But we focus especially on the role of two other factors: the prior level of intimacy between the victim and the offender in the scenario (using a broader range of levels than most previous studies) and the respondent's previous exposure to a victim of rape (a potentially important factor that has received little attention in the literature). Our exploration of these factors indicates the importance of self-interest and the salience of rape in shaping men's and women's perceptions of the acceptability of non-consensual intercourse.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early feminist scholars of rape, such as Brownmiller (1975) and Griffin (1971, 1979), were instrumental in changing the definition of rape in popular discourse. They both argued that rape was not a sexual crime but a crime of power. That rape, in short, was terrorism. They eloquently pointed to the power differential that exists between men and women, and they claimed that it is precisely this power differential that is the basis on which rape as terrorism operates. While we agree that indeed rape is about power, it is also about sex. Rape is about entitlement to sex. Men, by virtue of their structural position of power, can virtually demand sex, if they choose to, from women, especially in intimate heterosexual relationships. We begin with the basic assumption that non-consensual intercourse is rape regardless of the relationship between the parties (which is, in some states, the legal definition of rape), and then set out to explore how a sample of college students define non-consensual intercourse.

Previous research in the United States offers striking evidence of variation in definitions of rape and indicates that our basic assumption is far from universally accepted.[3] For example, as noted previously, Koss et. al. (1987) found that of women whose sexual experiences fit a legal definition of rape only 26% labelled their experience as such. Bourque (1989:139), in reviewing the literature regarding perceptions of rape, notes a finding by Zellman, Goodchilds, Johnson, and Giarrusso (1981) that "Adolescents appear reluctant to label non-consensual sex within a dating relationship as rape even if the guy slugs the girl". Pirog-Good and Stets (1989), in reviewing the data collected by Muehlenhard and others, note that "College students indicate that if a woman permits a man to pay all dating expenses instead of splitting the costs with him, it is more likely that she wants to have sex and it is more justifiable for him to have sex with her against her will" (Pirog-Good and Stets 1989:172; see also Muehlenhard 1988; Muehlenhard, Friedman and Thomas 1985).

Sanday (1990) and Scully (1990) examine attitudes toward rape from the perspective of the victim, the offender, and the general public. The attitudes of the various groups they study all depart significantly from legal (as well as feminist) definitions of rape, especially the attitudes of offenders. For example, in her study of fraternity gang rape, Sanday documents that the victim and the offender have very different notions of what constitutes

[3]Variations in definitions of rape are also evident cross-culturally (see, for example, Shostak's (1981: p. 116) account of a !Kung woman's forced sexual initiation and Sanday's (1981) analysis of cross-cultural variation in the incidence of rape). However, since our data are from a U.S. population, we restrict our literature review to studies of attitudes toward rape in the United States.

consent. She notes that "...a woman may or may not agree to have sex with one man. If she has agreed to some sexual activity, the men assume that she has agreed to all sexual activity regardless of whether she is conscious or not. In the minds of the boys involved the sexual behavior is not rape. On many campuses this opinion is shared by a significant portion of the campus community" (Sanday 1990:4). Furthermore, she notes that failure to consent resulting from intoxication, prior consent, and "teasing" prior to an incident of non-consensual intercourse was seen as rape by many women but not by most men, who considered the intercourse justifiable. In studying convicted rapists, Scully (1990:144) finds similar attitudes: "...from the perspective of these men, rape depends on whether they, not their victims, perceive a violation."

Studies of stereotypes about rape have also provided important evidence regarding beliefs about rape. In her early work on adherence to rape stereotypes, Burt (1980) finds that sex role stereotyping, adversarial sex-role beliefs, and acceptance of interpersonal violence all predict rape stereotype acceptance. But neither knowing a victim of rape nor exposure to media treatments of sexual assault were significant predictors in her study, nor was gender. Most studies of rape stereotype acceptance, however, tend to find at least some evidence that women are less likely than men to accept such stereotypes[4] (Barnett, and Feild 1977; Feild 1978; Gilmartin-Zena 1988; Reilly, Lott, Caldwell and DeLuca 1992; Williams and Holmes 1981). Research on rape stereotypes has also documented that among college students, adherence can be reduced by feminist rape education (Fonow, Richardson, and Wemmerus 1992), and that among women, exposure to pornography that depicted rape stereotypes, such as force resulting in actual consent and force resulting in arousal of the victim, resulted in more sympathetic feelings for depicted rape victims and lower scores on the Rape Myth Attitude scale (Mayerson and Taylor 1987). Finally, Giacopassi and Dull (1986) and Luginbuhl and Mullin (1981) found that among college students rape stereotype acceptance was related to avoidance of blame; women accepted rape stereotypes that allowed them to avoid blame when taking the role of the victim and men accepted rape stereotypes that allowed them to avoid blame when taking the role of the offender. Women most often rejected rape stereotypes that placed responsibility on the character of the woman (such as her occupation, marital status or drug use status) but accepted rape stereotypes that placed responsibility on the be-

[4]Feild (1978) also examined the acceptance of rape stereotypes among three specialized groups: convicted rapists, police officers, and rape crisis counselors. He notes that police officers were more similar to rapists than counselors. Hall, Howard, and Boezio (1986) also studied a prison population, concluding that male prisoners' tolerance for rape is associated with sexist attitudes.

havior of the woman (for example, choosing to walk alone at night). Men followed the opposite pattern.

Attitudes toward rape have also been studied using vignettes. For example, Burt and Albin (1981) explored the relationship between acceptance of rape stereotypes and attitudes toward rape as presented in vignettes. They found that the higher one's level of rape stereotype acceptance the more likely one was to believe that the victim depicted in the vignette acted in some way to precipitate the rape and the less likely one was to label the vignette as rape. In a study of assignment of blame in a mock jury case, Pugh (1983) found no gender differences for assignment of blame but also found that men were less likely than women to convict the rapist. Kanekar, Shaherwalla, Kunju, Franco, and Pinto (1991) found significant differences in the amount of blame assigned and rate of conviction based on the relationship between the victim and the offender, while Luginbuhl and Mullin (1981) found differences in assignment of blame when the reputation of the victim was varied. Several studies have examined respondents' assessment of sexual events by varying the relationship between the victim and the offender (e.g., Bridges 1991; Check and Malamuth 1983; Gerdes, Dammann, and Heilig 1988; L'Armand and Pepitone 1982; Kanekar Shaherwalla, Franco, Kunju and Pinto, 1991; Tetrault and Barnett 1987). All of these studies found that there were differences in the assessment of blame and responsibility depending on the relationship between the victim and the offender. However, these studies limited the manipulation to 2 or 3 relationships (stranger, acquaintance and date being the most commonly used), and some manipulated other variables as well, such as force and resistance (Bourque 1989; Williams 1984).

In sum, the literature documents clear gender differences in perceptions of rape, with women generally more critical than men, and we expect to find the same pattern in our analyses. There is also support for the notion that there are differences in the assessment of scenarios when the relationship between the victim and the offender is varied, a finding we also expect to replicate. But our analyses extend the findings of previous studies by considering a broader range of levels of intimacy across scenarios and exploring variations in gender differences across that range as well. Previous literature has not documented any clear relationship between exposure to a victim of rape and interpretations of rape,[5] but findings that rape education and other media exposure may affect beliefs about rape

[5]Reilly, Lott, Caldwell and DeLuca (1992) address victimization, but treat it as a dependent variable, while we will explore its effect on interpretations of rape, thus treating it as an independent variable.

lead us to believe that this variable deserves further consideration. We expect that such exposure will be associated with greater criticism of rape.

DATA AND METHODS

The analyses that follow rely on data from a questionnaire that examined reactions to a series of scenarios depicting non-consensual sexual intercourse. The questionnaire was administered to undergraduates enrolled in one of two introductory level sociology courses[6] at a large midwestern university. Participation was voluntary, but questionnaires were completed by virtually all students present in class, for a total of 533 respondents Two of these had missing data, and therefore, the final sample consisted of 531 students. The sample is generally typical of a college student sample: all undergraduates, mostly white (87.5%), unmarried (92.8%), first or second year students (80.2%), and 22 years old or younger (94.5%). The most common religious denomination was Catholicism (45.6%) while 21.8% of the students reported being Protestant and 6.3% were Jewish. The remaining 26.3% reported having another or no religious affiliation. The enrollment of the classes, however, was predominately female (71%). We conducted analyses to test whether age, race, religion, and year in college predicted responses to the scenarios. None of these factors was significant, probably due in large part to the limited variation in these independent variables. While it would also be useful to gather data on a representative sample of adults in the United States, both to allow for generalizability and for greater variation in social/demographic independent variables, a great deal can be learned from examining the attitudes expressed by these college student respondents. This sample was likely to have attitudes that were more critical of non-consensual sexual intercourse than would be reflected in a national sample, due to their age, education level, and the fact that most of these students had received some education regarding rape (in the context of university orientation and dorm orientation).[7] Therefore, this sample may provide a relatively conservative test of the impact of prior intimacy and exposure to a victim of sexual assault on interpretations of non-consensual intercourse.

[6]Various analyses were conducted to test for differences between the two courses in responses, and no significant differences were evident. Therefore, the sample was merged and analyzed as a whole.

[7]Although a formal measure of respondents' exposure to rape education would have been useful for comparison none was included in this survey.

Dependent Variables

The central dependent variable in our analyses addressed assessments of the acceptability of the man's behavior in each scenario of non-consensual intercourse. Previous studies using vignettes or scenarios have tended to take one of two approaches. Some varied several dimensions across a large number of scenarios. For example, Bourque (1989) varied amount of force used, amount of resistance offered by the victim, race of the offender, marital status of the victim, location of the rape, and relationship between the victim and the offender. Other studies have focused only on the relationship between the victim and the offender, (Bridges 1991; Burt and Albin 1981; Check and Malamuth 1983; Kanekar, Shaherwalla, Franco, Kunju and Pinto, 1991; L'Armand and Pepitone 1982; Williams 1984), using a small number of variations in the relationship. Our analysis focused only on the relationship between the victim and the offender, but that dimension was considered in greater detail by addressing five relationships of varying intimacy: acquaintances, coworkers, a dating couple, an engaged/cohabiting couple and spouses. The engaged/cohabiting scenario was a split ballot experiment, with some respondents receiving a version in which the couple was cohabiting. There were no significant differences in responses to these two versions and therefore scores were combined to form a single engaged/cohabiting measure. We altered minor details across the scenarios to prevent monotony, but force used by the offender and resistance employed by the victim were held constant (and other variables, such as race and occupation of the offender were not addressed). Because our emphasis is on varying levels of intimacy, it was crucial to hold force and resistance constant. In terms of force, no specific information is included in the scenarios. In terms of resistance, each scenario ended with the phrase, "Despite her protests intercourse occurred." Of course, the intentionally vague quality of these descriptions of force and resistance leaves the respondent free to imagine different details depending on the level of prior intimacy, which allows us to examine whether their assessment of acceptability is influenced by that prior intimacy. After each scenario the respondent was asked whether the behavior of the man in the scenario was totally acceptable, somewhat acceptable, somewhat unacceptable, or totally unacceptable. The text of these scenarios is shown in Appendix A.

Given our interest in determining what shapes interpretations of non-consensual intercourse, we did not use the terms "rape" or "sexual assault" in the scenarios nor in the response options. We did not want to bias the respondents by suggesting that the scenarios might constitute rape. Past research (Koss 1985; Koss et. al. 1987; Bourque 1989; Warshaw 1988) indicates that respondents use a limited definition of rape when that term

("rape") is offered to them. Therefore, we focused instead on whether or not the man's behavior was perceived to be totally unacceptable. Responses to the scenarios are presented separately in some analyses but are also combined into a summary measure representing the number of scenarios for which the respondent considered the behavior of the man totally unacceptable (ranging from 0 to 5, alpha = .72). This is referred to as the unacceptability summary measure.

We also conducted analyses in which "somewhat unacceptable" rather than "totally unacceptable" was used as a scale cutoff point, and the findings were very similar (data not shown). However, we prefer to emphasize the version that measures the evaluation of total unacceptability because our main concern is whether the respondents perceived the scenarios as constituting rape (without using the word "rape"). Therefore, only a response of totally unacceptable was reasonably consistent with labelling the behavior as rape. Clearly we realize that a "totally unacceptable" response may not equal a response of "rape", however, our view that the response of "totally unacceptable" is related closely to a perception of rape is supported by supplementary analyses as well. Respondents were also asked if the behavior of the man in each scenario should be considered a crime, and crosstabulations indicated that the percentage of responses indicating that the behavior of the man in each scenario was totally unacceptable paralleled the percentage indicating that the behavior should be considered a crime (data not shown). In addition, we conducted analyses using the full range of responses (from totally acceptable to totally unacceptable) rather than dichotomizing. The results were very similar, but again we believe the coding that focuses on the "totally unacceptable" response better captures definitions of rape. While the law identifies various degrees of sexual assault, the basic legal principle of what constitutes rape and what does not reflects a dichotomous definition just as our coding does.

Along with the scenarios, we also included a series of rape stereotype items. Four stereotypes were chosen from Burt (1980). Due to time limitations in administering the survey it was only possible to include a small subset of rape stereotype items. While we believe these provide a credible approximation of attitudes toward rape stereotypes, we recognize that these measures would be stronger if time had allowed for including the full scale used in previous studies (Burt 1980; Gilmartin-Zena 1988). The text of these items is as follows: "The usual rape victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation", "Women often falsely accuse men of rape", "Men rape due to their uncontrollable passions", and "If a man forces his wife to have sexual intercourse, it is not really rape". Responses to these items ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. For each item those who either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the rape stereotype (though not nec-

essarily with the item, as some items were reversed scored) were given a score of one while those who agreed or strongly agreed with the rape stereotype or responded "don't know" were given a score of 0. We sum these scores to create a measure with total scores ranging from 0 to 4, which represents the number of stereotypes the respondent rejects. The reliability of this summary measure was very low (alpha = .43), and therefore we also conducted these analyses on the four separate components of the summary measure. The results for the four separate items reveal the same pattern evident for the summary measure. Therefore, for ease of presentation, we report results for the summary measure only. This summary is referred to as the rape stereotype rejection measure.

Independent Variables

Two independent variables are of central importance in our analyses: respondent gender and exposure to sexual assault. Several measures addressed whether each respondent either had been a victim of sexual assault or knew someone who had been victimized. Again, due to time limitations, we decided to use a small subset of Koss' sexual victimization survey. We recognize these measures would be stronger if we administered the whole set of items, however we believe that these items provide a useful approximation of exposure to sexual assault. Choosing three measures from Koss (1982), we asked if the respondent had ever had sexual intercourse under the threat or use of physical force or after having been given alcohol or drugs. The respondent was also asked if she or he had ever been raped. The items that addressed the respondent's exposure to rape through the knowledge of someone who had been raped measured whether the respondent knew anyone who either had been forced to have sexual intercourse or indicated that she/he had been raped. While not all of these items use the term "rape", they do refer to non-consensual sexual intercourse, which we have defined as rape. These items were used to create a summary measure of exposure to a victim of rape or sexual assault. This measure categorizes respondents as either having no exposure to a victim of rape (answering "no" to all the victimization items) or having some exposure to rape—either knowing someone who had been raped or reporting that one had been raped oneself (answering "yes" to any one of the victimization items). The summary measure is referred to as "exposure to a victim of rape." Forty-eight percent of men and 56% of women, a non-significant difference, reported knowing a victim of rape.[8]

[8]In addition, the correlations among the various victimization items did not differ for male versus female respondents, suggesting that men and women probably interpret the meaning of the items similarly.

Table I. The Percent of Respondents Who Reported that the Behavior of the Man in the Scenario Was Totally Unacceptable by Gender

Scenario	(1) Percent by Gener		(2) Somer's D, Response by Gender
	Men (N = 150)	Women (N = 373)	
Acquaintance	95.3	99.2	0.04[a]
Work	82.0[b]	95.7[b]	0.14[a]
Date	64.7[b]	85.2[b]	0.21[a]
Engaged/cohabiting	32.7[b]	57.9[b]	0.25[a]
Marital	23.3[b]	45.0[b]	0.22[a]

[a]Statistically significant at $p < .05$.
[b]Chi-square significant at $p < .05$.

RESULTS

Our findings point to three important conclusions. First, consistent with previous studies, the level of intimacy in the relationship between the victim and the offender affects interpretations of non-consensual intercourse, even across the broader range of levels of intimacy addressed in our scenarios. When assessing the scenarios, respondents seem to consider the relationship between the parties. Secondly, gender differences in responses to the scenarios are evident, with women more likely to consider the man's behavior totally unacceptable, a finding also consistent with previous studies, but we also document that the magnitude of this gender gap increases as the level of previous intimacy in the scenario increases. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, exposure to a victim shows significant main effects and interacts significantly with gender in predicting responses to both the scenarios and the rape stereotypes, an issue little considered in previous studies.

Level of Intimacy

As the first columns of Table I indicate, the proportion of both male and female respondents who consider the man's behavior totally unacceptable decreases dramatically as the intimacy of the previous relationship increases. While almost all respondents reject the acquaintance rape scenario as totally unacceptable, fewer, only about 23% of men and 45% of women, consider the marital scenario to be totally unacceptable. It is interesting to note the percentage of people who found the engaged/cohabiting scenario

and the marital scenario to be totally unacceptable. Although we expected that with increasing intimacy the respondents would find the behavior increasingly acceptable, we were still surprised that only about half the women and fewer than a third of the men respondents totally rejected the behavior in the most intimate scenarios.

Gender Differences

Columns 1 and 2 of Table I document statistically significant gender differences in responses to all the scenarios. Fewer men than women find the behavior totally unacceptable, and the most notable cut-points occur differentially for men and women. Among men, the percentage who consider the behavior totally unacceptable drops over 10 points between the acquaintance and work scenarios, and over 17 points between the work and dating scenarios. For women, this decrease is more gradual, with decreases of 4 and 10 points respectively. Therefore, the drop between dating and engaged/cohabiting, while it is large for both men and women (approximately 30 points), is the first substantial drop for women but not the first for men. In other words, women seem to alter their responses most substantially and become less critical of the behavior of the man in the scenario only when the previous relationship is clearly physically intimate: the couple is engaged/cohabiting or married.

In addition, column 2 of Table I indicates that these gender differences increase as the level of prior intimacy between the couple increases. Somer's D is presented as a measure of association between gender and responses, and its magnitude increases as intimacy increases. Though the gender difference is quite small for the acquaintance scenario, for the most intimate relationship women are twice as likely as men to condemn the behavior.

Exposure to a Victim

In Table II, the effects of respondents' gender and victim exposure on the unacceptability summary are estimated through an analysis of variance. In this analysis the unacceptability summary scores (on a scale of 0 to 5) are broken down by both gender and level of exposure to a victim of rape (no exposure or some exposure, with some exposure indicating one had reported having experienced sexual violence and/or knew someone who had). Both gender and level of exposure to a victim of rape exhibit significant main effects: women and those with exposure to a victim score higher on the unacceptability summary measure, indicating that they consider a larger number of scenarios totally unacceptable. In addition, the interaction between gender and exposure is also significant. Being exposed to a victim

Table II. Means for the Unacceptability Summary Measure Broken Down by Gender and Exposure to a Victim and the Corresponding Analysis of Variance

Level of Exposure to a Victim of Rape	Gender	
	Males	Females
No exposure	2.59	3.63
Some exposure (know a victim or self is a victim)	3.40	3.99

Analysis of Variance

Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F
Gender	70.3	1	70.3	45.18[a]
Exposure to a victim	31.0	1	31.0	19.94[a]
Interaction (Gender × Exposure to a Victim)	5.49	1	5.49	3.53[b]

[a]F-value significant at $p < .05$ (2-tailed test).
[b]F-value significant at $p < .05$ (1-tailed test).

of rape has a differential effect on men and women: men's average summary score increases more than women's by exposure to a victim of rape.[9]

Additional support for the significant gender and victim exposure main effects as well as the gender/victim exposure interaction are evident when the rape stereotype rejection summary is used in place of the scenario summary as the dependent variable. As Table III shows, women and those exposed to a victim score higher overall, indicating that they reject a larger number of the rape stereotypes. And victim exposure increases men's scores more than it does women's.[10]

DISCUSSION

Rape is part of the landscape of women's lives, as many feminists have pointed out (e.g., Brownmiller 1975; Griffin 1971, 1979; MacKinnon 1987). From a very early age most women are taught that we are at risk for rape (usually by a stranger in the dark). Men may fear rape, at some level, for the women in their lives. However, they are not indoctrinated nor personally affected to the extent that women are, and we would argue that rape and the fear of rape do not occupy the central position in their lives that they do in the lives of women. This differential level of salience could ac-

[9]This differential effect remains evident even if the small number of women who reported experience of sexual violence are excluded from the analysis.
[10]See footnote 8.

Table III. Means for the Rape Stereotype Rejection Summary Measure Broken Down by Gender and Exposure to a Victim and the Corresponding Analysis of Variance

Level of Exposure to a Victim of Rape	Gender	
	Males	Females
No exposure	1.77	2.89
Some exposure (know a victim or self is a victim)	2.36	3.05

Analysis of Variance

Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F
Gender	86.67	1	86.67	83.30[a]
Exposure to a victim	10.38	1	10.38	9.98[a]
Interaction (Gender × Exposure to a Victim)	5.02	1	5.02	4.82[a]

[a]*F*-value significant at $p < .05$ (2-tailed test).

count for part of the main effect of gender in our analyses, explaining women's greater condemnation of the non-consensual intercourse scenarios and their greater rejection of the rape stereotypes.[11] Salience is also a plausible explanation for the main effect of victim exposure and the differential effect that such exposure has for men versus women. If rape is not as much a part of men's personal landscape, then knowing a rape victim may have a much larger effect on the level of salience (causing rape to become considerably more salient) than it would for women. For a woman, learning that someone she knows has been raped may just be one more piece of information added to an already substantial amount of information that women get from the media, parents, and schools. This is not to say that women are not affected by finding out someone they know has been raped (as the significant main effect of exposure documents), but that learning of this kind of incident may not alter their perceptions of non-consensual intercourse as much as it alters men's perceptions.

Self-interest is also important to consider in understanding our findings. Men and women have different kinds of self-interest in regards to rape. Men have a clear self-interest in defining rape as far away from themselves as possible, as some feminist writers have noted (Kelly 1988; Sanday 1990; Scully 1990), regardless of whether they have ever engaged in non-

[11]If men and women use the response categories very differently, it could be that our choice to dichotomize responses to the scenarios at "totally unacceptable" creates the gender difference. However, using a scale that dichotomizes along the middle category ("somewhat unacceptable") produces similar gender differences.

consensual intercourse. Thus, it is not surprising that men score significantly lower than women on our unacceptability summary measure (and on our rape stereotype rejection measure). In addition, this self-interest may increase as the intimacy depicted in each scenario increases because it may become more difficult for a man to distance himself from the perpetrator in the more intimate scenarios. Our finding that gender differences increase with the intimacy level of the scenarios is consistent with this interpretation. Women may also have an interest in defining rape as distantly from themselves as possible in order to deny the possibility that they will be victimized, but, more importantly, women have a self-interest in recognizing and rejecting sexual activity to which they do not consent.

In terms of the interaction between gender and knowing a victim, when men learn that they know a victim of rape, it may be in their self-interest to define rape more broadly in order to understand the experience of their acquaintance. Women, on the other hand, already have a broader definition of rape, and knowing a victim may only slightly increase their self-interest in further broadening that definition. However, while self-interest may play some role in explaining the interaction between gender and exposure to a victim, we believe that salience provides a more compelling explanation in accounting for the interaction effect.[12]

In interpreting the greater impact of exposure to a victim on men's versus women's attitudes toward rape, it is important to recall that our victim exposure measure includes respondents who themselves reported being victims. All these respondents were women, and they account for only 5% of the women who have exposure to a victim. Other researchers (Koss 1985; Koss et. al. 1987) report much higher rates of women reporting that they have been victims of sexual violence. We believe that our finding is lower than others reported in the literature for several reasons. First, the sexual victimization items used by Koss covered a wider range of experiences than the three measures we chose. Our measures do not cover the continuum that the items used by Koss and Warshaw (1988) do, therefore we probably miss women whose experiences fall at different points on the continuum. Secondly, it is possible that the students filling out our measures knew each other and were not comfortable reporting experience with sexual violence in a classroom setting. However, even with some self-identified rape victims

[12]Another possible explanation for this interaction might be that women know more victims of rape and that they know these victims within the context of several kinds of relationships (from intimate, close friends to acquaintances). Men, on the other hand, may know few rape victims and may be likely to know only about the rapes of women quite close to them. However, in order for the explanation that women know more rape victims to hold, we would expect more women than men to report knowing rape victims, and, as noted, 56% of women and 48% of men (a non-significant difference) in the sample report knowing someone who has been raped.

among the women reporting exposure to a victim, such exposure still has a significantly larger effect on men's attitudes. In addition, for women there may be a ceiling effect. Women with no exposure to a victim consider, on average, 3.63 out of 5 scenarios totally unacceptable, and those with exposure to a victim consider nearly 4 out of 5 scenarios totally unacceptable. Finally, it is interesting to note that men with some exposure to a victim of rape have mean scores on the unacceptability summary very similar to those of women with no exposure to a victim of rape. This seems to offer further evidence in support of the importance of salience in explaining men's and women's definitions of rape: the salience of rape for men may increase by knowing a victim of rape to nearly equal that of the salience most women have simply from socialization and day-to-day experience.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have demonstrated three important findings. First we noted that assessments of the acceptability of the man's behavior in scenarios of non-consensual intercourse was affected by the level of prior intimacy in the relationship between the victim and the offender. As the intimacy of that relationship increases, the tendency to consider the behavior totally unacceptable decreases. This finding is consistent with previous studies, but our analyses extend it to a larger number of relationships. Secondly, women are significantly more likely than men to condemn the man's behavior in the scenarios and these gender differences become larger as the relationships in the scenarios increase in prior intimacy. Finally, our data document a main effect of exposure to a victim of rape and an interaction between gender and such exposure in predicting assessments of the scenarios, with victim exposure having a larger effect for men than for women. These patterns regarding the effects of gender and victim exposure are also evident for responses to rape stereotypes. We argue that both self-interest and salience play a role in explaining gender differences in attitudes toward rape and in the effect of victim exposure. Men have a self-interest in defining rape narrowly and rape is also less salient to them. Women, on the other hand, have a self-interest in defining rape more broadly, and rape is clearly more salient for women regardless of exposure to a victim. These differential effects of salience and self-interest provide a useful framework for understanding both the main effect of gender on attitudes toward rape and the larger effect of victim exposure for men relative to women.

Some of our findings confirm what feminists have criticized: the tendency in the United States to tolerate rape in intimate relationships, assuming that it is not "really" rape, and the tendency for men to be

especially tolerant of such behavior. In addition, the fact that disagreement between men and women increases with the level of prior intimacy depicted in a scenario suggests that men are more unwilling than women to recognize the problem of rape in intimate relationships. However, more hopeful implications are offered by our finding that exposure to a victim of rape has an especially large impact on men's condemnation of rape behavior. Although we did not ask our respondents about their experience with rape education, the effect of exposure to a victim on men's attitudes suggests the possibility that rape can be made more salient to men and rape stereotypes debunked by rape education programs as well (Gordon and Riger 1991). Given that belief in rape stereotypes varies by age, and that definitions regarding rape vary cross-culturally (Sanday 1981), it seems reasonable that rape education programs be tailored to various audiences. This finding suggests that education designed to increase the salience of rape to men may be able to transform their attitudes, and that greater communication between men and women about the prevalence of rape may also encourage men to recognize the problem.

APPENDIX A

Text of the Scenarios

Acquaintance. The scene is an apartment building. A man knocks on his neighbor's door and when she answers, he asks to borrow some cat food. She tells him to step inside for a minute while she gets it. Seeing that she is alone, he closes the door behind him and locks it. He tells her that he would like to have intercourse with her. She refuses, but despite her protests intercourse occurs.

Work. Mary and Dan both work at a bank. Occasionally they see each other on the elevator. One evening Mary and Dan are both working late and they are the only two people in the building. Dan enters Mary's office with a cup of coffee he has brought for her. Dan begins kissing Mary. She indicates that she does not want to engage in sexual activity. Despite her protests intercourse occurs.[13]

[13]This scenario and the next three scenarios do not include the phrase "she refuses" before this final line. Ideally, that phrase would have been included in all five scenarios. However, the phrase "despite her *protests*" is included in all scenarios, so the woman's lack of consent is held constant across scenarios. In addition, "she refuses" was included in the scenario that most clearly reflects a conservative definition of rape (victim and offender are nearly strangers); therefore, we believe that responses to that scenario would be similar even without the inclusion of "she refuses". Finally, our conclusions center more around the effects of gender and victim exposure than around the raw percentage rejecting each scenario; therefore, the variation in the use of this phrase should have little impact on our central conclusions.

Date. Mark and Melissa have dated on and off for several months. They have engaged in sexual activity but they have never had intercourse. One evening while watching a video at Melissa's apartment, Mark begins necking with Melissa. After a while Mark begins initiating sexual intercourse. Although Melissa has agreed to necking, she says that she does not want to have intercourse. Despite her protests intercourse occurs.

Engaged/Cohabiting (Split Ballot, Each Respondent Received One of the Two Versions). Greg and Linda have been (engaged/cohabiting) for about a year. They have been having intercourse regularly since they (became engaged/began cohabiting). One saturday afternoon Greg begins necking with Linda. Greg attempts to have intercourse with Linda and she says that she just doesn't feel like it right now. Despite her protests intercourse occurs.

Marital. Brett and Lilly have been married for several years. One evening after dinner Brett suggests they go up to bed. Lilly joins him as she is quite tired. Brett initiates sexual relations, but Lilly reminds Brett of an early appointment she has and remarks that she is tired. Despite her protests intercourse occurs.

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