

The Impact of Film Manipulation on Men's and Women's Attitudes Toward Women and Film Editing¹

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The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of film manipulation on men's and women's attitudes toward women and film editing. One hundred and seventy-four participants were randomly assigned to one of four groups. Three groups viewed a particular manipulation of the treatment film (i.e., uncut, mosaic-ed, or edited) *The Accused*, a movie about gang rape that was based on a true story. The fourth group served as a control. As predicted, men reported significantly higher levels of traditionalism and rape myth acceptance-related attitudes at the onset of the study, whereas women reported higher levels of empathic attitudes. Following the study, and as expected, women experienced significantly more attitude change as a result of viewing the treatment film; men's rape myth-related attitudes nonetheless continued to exceed those of women. Finally, men's positive attitudes toward favoring editing decreased as sexual violence increased, whereas women's pro-editing attitudes increased as sexual violence increased. The theoretical implications of the study, as well as the impact of viewing sexual violence in a more reality-based, versus a more entertaining, forum are discussed.

KEY WORDS: rape myth acceptance; sexual violence; film editing.

Controversy exists regarding the impact of sexually explicit media (e.g., soft- or hardcore pornography) on consumers' attitudes and behaviors. The concern associated with the impact of such media is augmented when we consider that sexually explicit media often involve sexual coercion or rape (e.g., Allen, Emmers, Gebhardt, & Giery, 1995; Emmers-Sommer & Burns, 2001). Indeed, it is not unusual for violent sexually explicit material to involve brutal rape, torture, or, in extreme circumstances, death (i.e., "snuff films"). In material of this nature, women are degraded and objectified (Check & Malamuth, 1985). Some existing research findings suggest that exposure to sexually explicit and sexually violent

material increases negative attitudes toward women such that those who are exposed to such material are more inclined to embrace a proviolence attitude toward women. For example, in a meta-analysis of results of experimental and nonexperimental exposure to violent and nonviolent pornography and rape myth acceptance, Allen et al. (1995) found an effect for experimental studies, particularly for violent pornography. Specifically, the more the female victim was brutalized (i.e., savagely raped, beaten), the more inclined participants were to believe that she was responsible in some way for her treatment. The effect was stronger for men than for women. Recent research on violence in video games, television, movies, and the Internet found that those exposed to movie violence demonstrated more proviolence attitudes (Funk, Baldacci, Pasold, & Baumgardner, 2004). Other researchers, however, argue that sexually explicit material does not cause negative attitudes toward women (Padgett, Brislin-Slutz, & Neal, 1989).

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It is of theoretical interest to researchers whether or not consumers learn attitudes and behaviors from sexually explicit and violent material (Allen & D'Alessio, 1991; Check & Malamuth, 1983). Although much research has been conducted on sexually explicit and sexually violent material that is presented as entertainment, less research has been done with such material presented in a more realistic forum such as a documentary or a film based on a true-life experience. For example, one problem is that the portrayal of consequences for the perpetrator (i.e., arrest, jail time) is often not present in the material.

Furthermore, theoretical interest is heightened as media options exist today that impact the type of material to which a consumer is exposed. For example, although the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) rates films and provides the reason for the rating to consumers, supplemental material available on DVD (e.g., Director's Cuts, deleted scenes, alternative endings) is not rated by the MPAA. Often, the supplemental material involves graphic material that was too explicit for the film to earn its rating and had to be cut for distribution. Thus, consumers, including children and adolescents, could be exposed to enhanced explicit material—material that might exceed the MPAA rating in terms of sex, nudity, violence, or language.

In addition to the explicit material that is available to consumers, edited original material is also making its way into the mainstream for public consumption. For example, several US television stations broadcast films that contain explicit language that is “bleeped out” or scenes that involve nudity, sex, or violence that are “fuzzed out,” blackscreened, or completely edited out. Companies also exist that edit explicit material, such as sex, violence, nudity, and language, in popular film. Companies such as Clean Flicks professionally edit film so that consumers are not exposed to explicit material. The edited films are available for rental and consumers also have the option to submit a film of their choice to be “cleaned up” before they allow their children to watch it. The current study was designed to address the theoretical implications of exposure to explicit material presented in a more realistic, versus a more entertaining, fashion, as well as to consider the technological options and their implications. First, we sought to examine the impact of film manipulation on men's and women's attitudes toward women. Second, we were interested in whether or not sexually violent material presented in a more realistic—versus a more entertaining—fashion affects attitudes

toward women. Specifically, many mainstream films or pornographic films portray sexual violence as entertainment. That is, the woman typically resists sexual come-ons, coercion, or even rape, only to acquiesce ultimately and subsequently enjoy the encounter. For example, there is a scene in the recent film *Lost in Translation* in which a prostitute unexpectedly arrives at the Bill Murray character's hotel room and wants to engage in role-play during which she is ravaged and sexually overtaken by him. Even though Murray's character was never asked about his preferences, the prostitute assumed that coercion is what would interest him. When Murray's character conveys his uninterest, the prostitute becomes upset, drops to the floor, and feigns resistance. In more graphic pornographic films, women are often attacked, beaten, and/or gang-raped . . . only to end up enjoying the encounter when all is said and done. Indeed, even old black and white movies often portray a woman slapping the face of a man who was pursuing her only to end up in a loving embrace. Overall, charges are not filed in such “entertaining” media, no punishment to the perpetrator(s) is shown. In more realistic media portrayals of sexual violence, such as documentaries or films based on true stories, the target of the coercive act demonstrates suffering, and the perpetrator's punishment for the act, such as jail time, is portrayed. It is of interest whether or not viewing media that depict suffering, lack of enjoyment of the act, and consequences for the perpetrator(s) lessens a viewer's proviolent attitudes toward women. Third, also worthy of examination is how manipulating (e.g., editing) sexual violence in a film affects consumers' perceptions of the film's integrity. Of interest is how manipulating sexually violent images affects not only attitudes toward women, but also attitudes toward the editing and the integrity of the work.

Rape Myths

Burt (1980) originated the term “rape myths.” Rape myth acceptance (RMA) includes beliefs and values associated with sexual assault, the perpetrators, and the victims. Burt (1980) defined rape myths as “prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists—in creating a climate hostile to rape victims” (p. 217). Beliefs associated with RMA include that the victim of a rape is somewhat or completely responsible for the act. The RMA measure was designed to identify an individual's

agreement with such beliefs (Burt & Albin, 1981). Other related measures also exist.

Burt's (1980) measures has been used quite extensively to test researchers' hypotheses related to pornography (Allen et al., 1995). They have been rarely used to test situations that involve sexual violence in "non-entertaining" forums, such as documentaries or true-life portrayals. Overall, whether consumers adopt adverse attitudes from sexual media is of concern. Further, whether adoption of such attitudes relates to adverse behaviors is of interest. In a meta-analysis, Sheppard, Hartwick, and Warshaw (1988) demonstrated a strong relationship between attitudes and behavior.

Theoretical Approaches to Sexually Explicit and Violent Media

A variety of theoretical approaches can address or have addressed the impact of sexually explicit and violent media on consumers' attitudes and behaviors. Particularly relevant to this study are social learning theory and aggressive responses to sexually violent material.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory argues that viewers learn about reality symbolically (Bandura, 1977, 1994). For example, one way that individuals learn sexual information is from films that include sexual content. Thus, men and women could learn information regarding the nature of sexual relationships from films and television. If the material they view depicts acts that are coercive or nonconsensual in nature, the attitudes and behaviors portrayed in the film could potentially be embraced and practiced by the viewers (Allen et al., 1995; Duncan, 1990; Mundorf, Allen, D'Alessio, & Emmers-Sommer, in press). That is, viewers of sexually explicit and/or violent material come to believe that the relationships portrayed in the film reflect those of real life (Check & Malamuth, 1985). In support of this theoretical argument, recent researchers have found a substantial link between children's perceptions of media messages and observations of the children's behavior (Earles, Alexander, Johnson, Liverpool, & McGhee, 2002). Recent research on exposure to pornography illustrates the potential negative behavioral outcomes of the exposure. In particular, Allen, D'Alessio,

and Emmers-Sommer (1999) found that although sexual offenders and nonoffenders did not differ in their frequency of exposure to pornography, they did differ in their reactions to exposure. That is, the offenders were more aroused by the pornographic material, particularly when the material was violent pornography and mirrored their own crimes. This finding can be interpreted as the offenders having learned about sexual behavior from violent sexual material.

Aggressive Responses

Aggressive responses "represent a set of theories or positions that argue that the erotica or sexual behavior in the material is *not* the source of negative effects" (Allen et al., 1995, pp. 9–10). Rather, this perspective argues that the violent nature of material is what relates to harmful effects (Donnerstein, 1984). Specifically, erotica or consensual sexual behavior should not impact the viewer's behavior negatively, but violent sexual material should produce harmful effects (Allen et al., 1995). This argument could be applied to edited material as well. That is, one would expect a greater effect on rape myth-related attitudes from sexually violent images than from "fuzzed out" or completely edited images. Overall, and similar to social learning theory, aggression models argue that specific stimuli must be present for learning to take place. Unlike social learning theory, however, an aggressive response will not be an outcome unless the sexual stimuli involve violence.

Men, Women, and Sexual Coercion

Although both women and men perpetrate sexually coercive behaviors (Menard, Hall, Phung, Ghebrial, & Martin, 2003; Sigelman, Berry, & Wiles, 1984) and are victimized by sexual coercion (Menard et al., 2003; Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988), the majority of victims of sexual crimes are women (Becchofer & Parrot, 1991). In fact, the most up-to-date statistics on incidence of violent crime between 1973 and 2002 indicate that rape and sexual assault were the only crimes in which women experienced higher rates of victimization than men (United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004).

Various theoretical perspectives can explain the discrepancy in violence perpetration and victimization. One perspective suggests that men who are

sexually coercive are just following a “boys will be boys” agenda, reacting to hormonal urges, and what society dictates “real men” are supposed to do (Emmers-Sommer, 2002). Another theoretical approach argues that men’s coercion of women is due to power inequality and men’s desire to sustain the imbalance (Stock, 1991). Another theoretical framework suggests that the traditional dating script dictated by society imposes an aggressive expectation on men and a coy, recipient expectation on women (Byers, 1996). Research suggests that men tend to hold more traditional attitudes (e.g., the man “wears the pants” in the relationship and the woman complies) about relationships than women do (Byers, 1996), and such attitudes contribute to men’s use of verbal sexual coercion (Muehlenhard & Falcon, 1991). Overall, then, it is not surprising that men report rape myth acceptance beliefs to a greater degree than do women (Anderson, Cooper, & Okamura, 1997). In regard to the present study, it was expected that at the onset of the experiment, men’s attitudes toward traditionalism and rape myth-related attitudes would exceed those of women. Conversely, it was expected that women would report greater empathic concern than men would. Based on these expectations, the following hypotheses are presented:

- H1: Women report stronger empathic concern than men at Time 1.
- H2: Men report stronger traditional attitudes than women at Time 1.
- H3: Men report stronger adversarial sexual beliefs than women at Time 1.
- H4: Men report stronger acceptance of interpersonal violence than women at Time 1.
- H5: Men report stronger rape myth acceptance than women at Time 1.

It was expected that the above attitudes would be augmented when men and women were exposed to visual stimuli that involved varied degrees of sexual violence.

Effects of Viewing Media-Dictated Sexual Violence

As noted earlier, images that depict women’s sexuality in motion pictures, television programs, and advertisements are pervasive in the modern film and broadcast media. It is likely that they cause lasting effects on the audience’s perceptions of and attitudes toward women’s sexuality. Furthermore, extant research provides support for both attitudinal

and behavioral effects on audiences, especially male audience members, who have viewed a breadth of film and broadcast content that depict acquaintance, stranger, and gang rape as well as other sexual violence against women.

Malamuth and Check (1981) reported that exposure to violent sexual content in films *increased* male participants’ acceptance of violence against women, whereas female participants’ acceptance *decreased*. The discrepancy between the sexes’ response to sexual violence against women is representative of a trend evident in similar studies. In a study conducted by Weisz and Earls (1995), it was reported that although viewing a sexually violent film produced an equally negative reaction from both male and female participants, only male participants demonstrated a negative behavioral response. Specifically, men were more accepting of rape myths and interpersonal violence, were more attracted to sexual aggression, were less sympathetic toward a rape trial victim, and less likely to judge a perpetrator as guilty of rape. Malamuth and Briere (1986) found that increased aggression is one notable behavioral effect in men that might indirectly result from viewing sexual violence against women.

There is also research to suggest that repeated exposure to sexually violent films tends to desensitize both men and women to rape and to increase the likelihood that both sexes will believe a rape was precipitated by the victim’s actions (Goleman, 1985). Even exposure to still images that depict women’s sexuality can result in male participants’ reporting significantly more acceptance of rape supportive attitudes (Lanis & Covell, 1995). Specifically, women exposed to repeated exposure to films that depict sexual violence against women were less likely to believe that the victim was distressed by the assault (Dexter, Penrod, & Linz, 1997). Perhaps the more exposure women and men have to content that depicts sexual violence against women, the more desensitized they become to the reality of rape itself.

Film Integrity and Film Editing

More recent research has explored the effects that watching edited versions of films has on people (Berry, Gray, & Donnerstein, 1999; King, 2000; Lang, Bolls, Potter, & Kawahara, 1999; Lang, Zhou, Schwartz, Bolls, & Potter, 2000; Messaris, 1994). A film can be edited in many ways to manipulate a viewer’s impression of the story and/or the

characters. Whereas the study of attitude change due to viewing films shown in their original form has been done for some time, the research on attitude change that result from film edits is relatively new. Lang et al. (1999; Lang et al., 2000), for example, explored how cuts and edits (both television and film) affected viewers' arousal, attention, and memory. Their findings revealed that cuts in films increase viewer attention and arousal during the scene in which the cutting occurred. In a series of experiments, Berry et al. (1999) explored changes in viewers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral change due to the degree of violence exhibited in a film. Experiment 1 involved a 90 s edit of *Reservoir Dogs*. Version one consisted of one clip minus one of two cuts. Specifically, edited out professionally was either (a) the shooting of the policemen that the shuddering and shaking of their bodies and the spraying of blood, or (b) a scene in which a woman is shot in the chest—the bullet hole was edited out. In version two, both edits described in version one were used. In version three, the whole clip was shown with no edits. The results of the experiment suggest several important findings about attitudinal changes that stem from film edits. First, participants rated edited films as less violent than unedited films even when the edits were minor and contextualized within the film. Second, participants could identify differences in violent content in edited versus unedited films regardless of the length of the film. In addition, some significant findings were attributed to participants' gender. First, the edited films were more enjoyable for female than for male participants to watch. Second, women found the edited scenes to be more arousing and disturbing than men did. These findings suggest that viewers' perceptions and enjoyment of films are affected when violence is edited.

King's (2000) research focused on how the editing of a film's audio content can have effects on viewers. Specifically, King focused on humorous film heroes in violent films. She argued that the use of humor could alter the meaning of behavior on-screen. For example, viewers would perceive a hero shooting a villain without witticism differently than a hero shooting a villain in which the shooting was preceded or followed by a wisecrack. King found that when the humor was unedited in violent scenes, women found the scenes more distressing, and men found the scenes less distressing.

Given the results of the previous research and considering that the treatment film used in the present study was based on a true story, it was ex-

pected that women would experience more attitude change due to viewing the treatment film than men would.

- H6: After viewing the film, men's traditional attitudes would increase more than women's.
- H7: After viewing the film, women's adversarial sexual beliefs would decrease more than men's.
- H8: After viewing the film, women's acceptance of interpersonal violence would decrease more than men's.
- H9: After viewing the film, women's rape myth acceptance would decrease more than men's.
- H10: After viewing the film, women's empathic concern would increase more than men's.
- H11: After viewing the film, men's attitudes toward editing sexual violence would become less favorable, whereas women's attitudes would become more favorable.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were recruited from communication courses at a large southwestern university. Participants were informed that they needed to be at least 18 years old to participate in the study, that the study would involve approximately 2.5 to 3 hours of their time, and that they would receive extra credit for their participation. The sample consisted of 174 undergraduate students (54 men and 120 women), a sample that is very representative of communication majors in terms of sex. Their ages ranged from 18 to 34 years old ($M = 19.86$, $SD = 1.88$). Over one-half of the participants (54%) were 19–20 years of age. Most of the participants were involved in a relationship (65 people were casually dating and 50 were seriously dating), whereas 50 people were uninvolved. Participants reported that their weekly usage of media ranged from .5 hours to 90 hours ($M = 16.895$, $SD = 13.74$). As for the amount of film viewed each week, participants reported viewing between 0 hours and 55 hours ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 4.75$). Fifty-four percent of the sample preferred a comedy instead of other genres such as drama (22%), action (18%), thriller (3%), pornography (2%), or science fiction (1%). For movie theme, 45% of the sample favored a love story, whereas 29% enjoyed a suspense story, and 18% chose sex and violence. Thirty-three percent of the male participants reported preferring

action films, and 41% preferred themes of sex and violence. Six percent of the men reported that they only view violent films, whereas no women reported such a preference. Conversely, 62% of the female participants reported preferring films with a love story theme. Regarding film rating preference, 65% preferred to view films that are R-rated and 23% favored PG-13 films.

Instruments

Adversarial Sexual Beliefs (ASB) Scale (Burt, 1980)

The ASB was designed to measure the acceptability of men using coercive force against women for sexual gratification. The 1–7 likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree) involves items such as “A woman will only respect a man who will lay down the law to her,” “A man’s got to show the woman who’s boss right from the start or he’ll end up henpecked,” “Women are usually sweet until they have caught a man, but then they let their true self show,” and “Most women are sly and manipulating when they are out to attract a man” (p. 222). Past reliability of the scale has been reported as Cronbach’s $\alpha = .802$ (Burt, 1980). In the present study, Cronbach’s alpha for the ASB was an acceptable .79 at Time 1 (T1) and .85 at Time 2 (T2).

Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence (AIV) Scale (Burt, 1980)

The AIV was designed to measure the acceptability of men’s use of force and physical violence in a sexual relationship with a woman. The 1–7 likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree) involves items such as “Being roughed up is sexually stimulating for a woman,” “Many times a woman will pretend she doesn’t want to have intercourse because she doesn’t want to seem loose, but she’s actually hoping the man will force her,” and “Sometimes the only way a man can get a cold woman turned on is to use force” (p. 222). In the present study, Cronbach’s alphas for the AIV were .50 at T1 and .56 at T2. An examination of items for the AIV suggested no discernable pattern in response to the items to explain the modest reliability. Because these reliabilities are consistent with past reliability of the scale (i.e., Cronbach’s $\alpha = .586$, Burt, 1980), the scale was used in the present analysis.

Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMA) (Burt, 1980)

The RMA was designed to examine rape and the propensity to blame the victim for the perpetrator’s actions. The 1–7 likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree) involves items such as “A woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on their first date implies she is willing to have sex,” “Any healthy woman can resist a rapist if she really wants to,” and “In the majority of rapes, the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation” (p. 223). Past reliability of the scale has been Cronbach’s $\alpha = .875$ (Burt, 1980). In the present study, Cronbach’s alphas were acceptable, with .80 at T1 and .85 at T2.

Sex Role Stereotyping Scale (Burt, 1980)

This scale was utilized to examine attitudes toward traditionalism. Traditionalism promotes men acting “macho” and women acting “ladylike.” Men and women who hold traditional attitudes support the woman taking the man’s last name, the man working to earn the money, and the woman taking care of the house and the children. Items from the 1–7 likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree) include “A man should fight when the woman he is with is insulted by another man,” “There is something wrong with a woman who doesn’t want to get married and raise a family,” “It is acceptable for a woman to have a career, but marriage and family should come first,” and “It looks worse for a woman to be drunk than a man to be drunk.” In the present study, Cronbach’s α s for the scale were a moderate .62 at T1 and .68 at T2.

Film Editing and Integrity Scale

This scale was developed for the purpose of the present study. The 11-item scale was designed to measure attitudes toward editing film for offensive content and attitudes toward preserving the integrity of the art. Items from the 1–9 likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 9 = strongly agree) include, “I think that film should be shown in its original and entire form,” “Violence should be cut out of film entirely,” “Sex in film should be edited (i.e., scene fuzzed/blackened out),” and “Manipulating film compromises artistic integrity.” Three items were reversed on the scale to enhance reliability.

A higher score indicates a more favorable position toward editing film for sex, violence, and profanity, whereas a lower score indicates a position less in favor of editing. The items were subjected to a Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation. One factor, with items that demonstrate a “pro-editing” attitude, was extracted, and it explained 47% of the variance. Cronbach’s α s scale were .83 at T1 and .81 at T2.

Empathic Concern Scale (Dillard, 1983, cited in Stiff, Dillard, Somera, Kim, & Sleight, 1988)

The empathic concern scale was designed to measure levels of empathy, sympathy, and concern experienced by individuals toward others. The 1–5 likert scale (1 = does not describe me well, 5 = describes me very well) includes items such as “When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective toward them,” “I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person,” and “Other people’s misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal” (reverse-scored). Past Cronbach’s alphas for the scale have been .78 and .82 (Dillard, 1983, cited in Stiff et al., 1988). In the present study, Cronbach’s alphas were .70 at T1 and .80 at T2.

Procedure

Once at the data collection site, participants were randomly assigned to one of four groups: Group 1 received the uncut version of the treatment film. The treatment film was the US video release of the film *The Accused*. Group 2 received the mosaic-ed version of the treatment film (i.e., the sexually violent assault was shown, but the bodies were digitized so that viewers were unable to see exactly what was occurring). The researchers had access to digitizing equipment. One of the authors, trained in using the equipment, digitized the bodies and body parts displayed in the graphic, sexually violent scenes. Group 3 received the professionally edited version of the treatment film (i.e., sex and violence was edited out by Clean Flix and then the videotape was returned to the researchers). Group 4 received the control film, which was *Free Willy*, a film about a young boy and his friendship with a whale. As with group 1, group 4 received the US studio VHS version of the film. Regardless of group assignment, all participants viewed

their respective film in a darkened classroom to be consistent with a movie theatre setting; the darkened environment also lessened the likelihood that individuals could see one another’s reactions to the material. Given the hundreds of students who were recruited and randomly assigned, it was unlikely that individuals would sit next to someone they knew. As noted earlier, the treatment film was *The Accused*, an award-winning film about a gang rape in a bar and the trial that ensued to bring the perpetrators to justice. Jodie Foster earned an Academy Award for her portrayal of the sexually assaulted woman. The film was based on a true story and that fact is made known to viewers at the onset of the film. Specifically, a note comes onscreen to indicate to viewers that the film is based on a true story. Prior to the beginning of the experiment, participants received an informed consent form and completed the Time 1 questionnaire. Participants then saw their respective film and completed the Time 2 questionnaire immediately following the film. Participants then received an oral and written debriefing, received additional materials about sexual assault, and were thanked for their participation.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1 posited that women would report stronger empathic concern than men would at Time 1. H1 was supported, $t_{(171)} = -2.93, p < .004$ (men’s $M = 3.95$, women’s $M = 4.25$; higher mean = more empathy). As expected, going into the experiment, women were more empathic than men.

Hypothesis 2 asserted that men would report stronger traditional attitudes than women would at Time 1. H2 was supported, $t_{(171)} = -3.912, p < .0001$ (men’s $M = 4.37$, women’s $M = 5.20$; lower mean = stronger traditional attitudes). Thus, prior to the experiment, men held stronger traditional beliefs than women did.

Hypothesis 3 posited that men would report stronger adversarial sexual beliefs than women would at Time 1. H3 was supported, $t_{(170)} = -5.21, p < .0001$ (men’s $M = 4.60$, women’s $M = 5.40$; lower mean = stronger adversarial sexual beliefs). Thus, as expected, prior to the experiment, men were more likely than women to believe that the use of dominance over women in sexual relationships is acceptable, and they were more likely to believe that women are more manipulative in relationships than men are.

Hypothesis 4 asserted that men would report greater acceptance of interpersonal violence than women would at Time 1. H4 was supported, $t_{(170)} = -3.40$, $p < .001$ (men's $M = 5.30$, women's $M = 5.76$; lower mean = stronger acceptance of interpersonal violence). As expected, men were more likely than women to believe the use of interpersonal violence against women in relationships is acceptable.

Hypothesis 5 asserted that men would report greater rape myth acceptance than women would at Time 1. H5 was supported, $t_{(171)} = -4.75$, $p < .0001$ (men's $M = 5.14$, women's $M = 5.82$; lower the mean = greater acceptance of rape myth attitudes). Thus, prior to the experiment, men were more likely than women to believe that women who were raped had "asked for it" and that the culpability of the perpetrator is questionable.

It is important to note that participants were asked to report at the end of the T2 questionnaire if they had ever before seen the film they had just viewed. Results indicated that 19 individuals had seen the treatment film before. Participants who were assigned to one of the three levels of the treatment and had seen the film *The Accused* were eliminated from further analysis. Given the expected difference in men's and women's attitudes at the onset of the experiment, repeated measures ANCOVAs were conducted initially for all the tests with the dependent measure as the within-subjects factor, film group (uncut, mosaic, edited, control) as the between-subjects factor, and sex as the covariate for H's 6–11. Subsequent tests focused across the varied treatment levels as the repeated measure serves as its own control.

Hypothesis 6 posited that after viewing the film, men's traditional attitudes would increase more than women's would. The effect for sex was significant, $F_{(1,144)} = 15.63$, $\eta^2 = .098$, $p < .0001$. Contrary to expectations, women's traditional attitudes increased between T1 and T2 as a result of watching the film, $t_{(72)} = 2.80$, $p < .006$. It is possible that this finding demonstrates a defense mechanism. Specifically, traditional women would likely not have been in a bar alone in the first place. Men did not report a significant change in traditional attitudes. Results did indicate, however, that men held more traditional attitudes than women at T2, $t_{(107)} = -2.966$, $p < .004$. Only men ($M = 4.28$) and women ($M = 4.89$) in the professionally edited group significantly differed on traditionalism, $t_{(35)} = -2.37$, $p < .02$, although the difference between men and women in

the mosaic group approached significance, $t_{(35)} = -1.89$, $p < .06$ ($M = 4.03$ and $M = 4.78$, respectively). It is noteworthy that men were more traditional than women across conditions; women, but not men, experienced a significant increase in traditional attitudes.

Hypothesis 7 posited that after viewing the film, women's adversarial sexual beliefs would decrease more than men's. The effect for sex was significant, $F_{(1,146)} = 26.02$, $\eta^2 = .15$, $p < .0001$. As expected, women reported a decrease in adversarial sexual beliefs, $t_{(74)} = -4.46$, $p < .0001$. Although it was not as strong as the women's change between T1 and T2, men also reported a significant decrease in adversarial beliefs due to the treatment, $t_{(35)} = -2.58$, $p < .01$. Further, as expected, men's adversarial sexual beliefs were significantly higher than women's at T2, $t_{(110)} = -5.44$, $p < .0001$. Men ($M = 4.60$) in the uncut condition, $t_{(33)} = -3.37$, $p < .002$, reported more adversarial attitudes than women did in the same condition ($M = 5.61$). The same trend held for men ($M = 4.87$) and women ($M = 5.71$) in the mosaic condition, $t_{(37)} = -2.68$, $p < .01$, as well as men ($M = 4.63$) and women ($M = 5.59$) in the edited condition, $t_{(36)} = -3.20$, $p < .003$. Although men reported more adversarial beliefs than women across treatment conditions, it should be noted that men and women in the edited condition reported more adversarial beliefs than men and women in the mosaic condition. Men in the uncut condition reported the most adversarial beliefs.

Hypothesis 8 posited that after viewing the film, women's acceptance of interpersonal violence would decrease more than men's. The effect for sex was significant, $F_{(1,146)} = 13.41$, $\eta^2 = .084$, $p < .0001$. As expected, women reported a significant decrease in their acceptance of interpersonal violence after viewing the film, $t_{(72)} = -4.090$, $p < .0001$. As expected, men ($M = 5.41$) accepted interpersonal violence more than women did ($M = 6.10$) at T2, $t_{(110)} = -4.70$, $p < .0001$. Men ($M = 5.55$) and women ($M = 5.61$) significantly differed in the uncut condition, $t_{(33)} = -2.12$, $p < .04$, the mosaic condition (men's $M = 5.52$, women's $M = 6.06$), $t_{(37)} = -2.10$, $p < .04$, and the edited condition (men's $M = 5.19$, women's $M = 6.17$), $t_{(36)} = -3.75$, $p < .001$.

Hypothesis 9 asserted that after viewing the film, women's rape myth acceptance would decrease more than men's. The effect for sex was significant, $F_{(1,145)} = 20.88$, $\eta^2 = .126$, $p < .0001$. As expected, women reported a significant decrease in rape myth acceptance after viewing the film, $t_{(74)} =$

-4.464, $p < .0001$. Men's rape myth attitudes did not significantly change after viewing the film, although there was a trend toward significance, $t_{(36)} = -1.90$, $p < .06$. Further, men's ($M = 5.32$) rape myth acceptance was significantly higher than women's ($M = 6.05$) at T2, $t_{(100)} = 4.52$, $p < .0001$. Men ($M = 5.37$) and women ($M = 6.07$) in the mosaic condition significantly differed in acceptance of rape myths, $t_{(37)} = -2.707$, $p < .01$, as did men ($M = 5.17$) and women ($M = 6.16$) in the edited condition, $t_{(36)} = -3.18$, $p < .003$. Within sex comparisons showed that men in the uncut condition were the least accepting of rape myths ($M = 5.45$), whereas women in the uncut condition were the most accepting of rape myths ($M = 5.93$).

Hypothesis 10 posited that after viewing the treatment film, women's empathic concern would increase more than men's. The effect for sex was significant, $F_{(1,147)} = 10.44$, $\eta^2 = .066$, $p < .002$, however women did not report a significant increase in empathic concern between T1 and T2. After viewing the film, women ($M = 4.33$) were more empathic than men ($M = 3.96$), $t_{(110)} = -2.88$, $p < .005$. Only women ($M = 4.52$) in the mosaic condition were more empathic than men ($M = 4.15$) in the same condition, $t_{(37)} = -2.16$, $p < .02$. Although differences between men ($M = 3.94$) and women ($M = 4.18$) in the uncut condition and in the edited version ($M = 3.8$ and $M = 4.2$, respectively) did not reach significance, it is worth noting that both men and women in the uncut condition were the least empathic.

Hypothesis 11 asserted that after viewing the treatment film, men's attitude toward editing sexual violence would become less favorable, whereas women's attitude would become more favorable. The effect for sex demonstrated a trend toward significance, $F_{(1,141)} = 3.396$, $\eta^2 = .024$, $p < .06$. Overall, men ($M = 3.42$) were less in favor of editing film than women were ($M = 3.90$) and were more inclined to preserve the integrity of the work "as is." Men's ($M = 3.15$) and women's ($M = 4.19$) attitudes toward editing significantly differed in the uncut condition, $t_{(33)} = -2.24$, $p < .03$. Differences between men ($M = 3.37$) and women ($M = 4.07$) in the mosaic condition and in the edited condition (men's $M = 3.69$ and women's $M = 3.45$) were nonsignificant. It is interesting to note that as sexual violence increased, men's attitudes toward editing became less favorable whereas women's became more favorable. In sum, there was limited support for H11.

Additional Analyses

To test the hypotheses further, we examined how men's and women's attitudes changed within the condition to which they were randomly assigned. Women who saw the uncut version of the treatment film showed a significant decrease in their acceptance of interpersonal violence, $t_{(21)} = -2.35$, $p < .02$. Women who were randomly assigned to the mosaic condition experienced an increase in traditional attitudes compared to women in the uncut condition between T1 and T2, $t_{(26)} = 2.43$, $p < .02$, and significant decreases in adversarial sexual beliefs, $t_{(27)} = -2.98$, $p < .006$, acceptance of interpersonal violence, $t_{(26)} = -2.13$, $p < .04$, and acceptance of rape myths, $t_{(27)} = -3.58$, $p < .001$. Women assigned to the edited version of the film also experienced significant changes in attitude between T1 and T2. Specifically, women in this condition reported increased traditional attitudes, $t_{(24)} = 2.18$, $p < .04$, and significant decreases in adversarial sexual beliefs, $t_{(24)} = -3.13$, $p < .005$, acceptance of interpersonal violence, $t_{(25)} = -2.86$, $p < .009$, and rape myth acceptance, $t_{(25)} = -3.14$, $p < .004$. Men in the uncut condition reported a significant decrease in rape myth acceptance attitudes, $t_{(12)} = -2.28$, $p < .04$. There were no significant changes for men in the other conditions between T1 and T2.

DISCUSSION

As expected, women who viewed *The Accused* reported greater attitude shifts across the measures compared to men. It is of interest that the significant differences appear to be more a function of participant sex than of the group to which the participants were randomly assigned, although, as indicated, within differences occurred between T1 and T2 for the various treatment levels; the most change occurred in the mosaic condition for women. It could be that viewers are more affected when the material viewed is more reality-based than entertainment-based and that the effects are more pronounced for women. Indeed, often in pornographic films, scenes of sexual coercion culminate with the woman giving in or enjoying the act or show no consequences for the aggressor. Such scenes send messages to men that being aggressive is what women want and that a woman's resistance will ultimately evolve into her enjoyment. The desensitizing effect of viewing male-perpetuated violence against women is compounded

with each exposure to such content. This type of desensitization presents an especially potent side effect: The greater men's frequency of viewing this type of content, the more tolerant they become of violence against women (Malamuth & Check, 1981). Studies of material that depicts men perpetuating violence against women demonstrate effects for men and women, but stronger effects for men (Allen et al., 1995). A film such as *The Accused*, however, approaches sexual coercion somewhat differently. Specifically, although the film is based on a true story and that fact is made known to the viewers at the onset of the film, this knowledge might fall on the deaf ears of a desensitized audience who have grown accustomed to a large number of film plots touted as being based on "fact." In addition, this film portrayed rape as a violent act for which there was no "enjoyment" for the female character and real consequences (e.g., legal, social, personal) for the male perpetrators. The fact that the film depicted realities typical of a television news broadcast might be one plausible explanation as to why women's attitudes and beliefs were more affected than men's attitudes and beliefs. Further support for this contention was found on the T2 survey. Specifically, both men and women in the treatment groups were asked if the fact that *The Accused* was based on a true story increased their interest in the film. Men and women significantly differed in their answer; women were significantly more interested by the fact that the film was based on a true story than were men.⁵

First explored were differences between men's and women's empathic concern, traditional attitudes, adversarial sexual beliefs, acceptance of interpersonal violence, and rape myth acceptance. Men were expected to score higher on each scale, with the exception of empathy. Given that men are socialized to be more sexually aggressive and accepting of such aggression (Byers, 1996), it was expected that men would score significantly higher rape myths and rape myth-related attitudes at Time 1. Similarly, women are socialized to be more relational and accommodating than men (Byers). Thus, it was expected that women would exhibit greater empathic concern than men. Previous research (Skoe, Cumberland, Eisenberg, Hansen, & Perry, 2002) has also demonstrated that women are generally more concerned with interpersonal relations and issues and demon-

strate more thoughtful considerations and prosocial dispositions.

Traditionalism has also been reported as a significant factor linked to influence on a person's rape justifiability, rape myth acceptance, interpersonal violence, and adversarial sexual beliefs. Traditional men hold certain values and expectations about dating, marriage, and gender roles. Furthermore, traditional men maintain several other beliefs including, but not limited to, the beliefs that a woman should never contradict a man in public, that marriage and family should come first, and that men should be the sole providers in a relationship. Several researchers have found that men perceive women more negatively than women do (e.g., Byers, 1996; Emmers-Sommer & Allen, 1999). Therefore, men who hold traditional attitudes are more likely to authorize sexual coercion and perceive that it is okay. In accordance with interpersonal violence, many men will also hold beliefs such as that it is sexually stimulating for women to be "roughed up" or that a man may use force to "turn on" a cold woman. Men want to feel in control and might endorse violence and coercion in relationships (Truman & Tokar, 1996). In addition, many men are less likely than women to perceive forced sex as coercive (Emmers-Sommer & Allen). This is directly related to rape myth acceptance and rape myth-related attitudes.

Muehlenhard, Friedman, and Thompson (1985) found that traditional men are more likely to justify date rape. For example, if a woman goes to a man's house or apartment on their first date, then a man can assume she is consenting to sexual behavior. Further, male viewers of *The Accused* might have believed that Jodie Foster's character was consenting to the men's violent advances given that she was dancing provocatively and was scantily dressed. Men also hold more adversarial sexual beliefs and believe that women are manipulative and are out to take advantage of men. This harbored hostility that men might feel toward women is correlated with rape myth acceptance and may be a theoretical antecedent (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995).

Exposure to the sexually violent material in *The Accused* seemed to impact both men's and women's adversarial sexual beliefs and acceptance of sexual violence. Though men and women differed in terms of adversarial sexual beliefs and acceptance of interpersonal violence before exposure to the film, viewing the film only made these differences more distinct. As predicted, men in the uncut condition

⁵Women ($M = 6.93$) were significantly more interested by the fact that the film was based on true story than were men ($M = 5.4$), $t_{(128)} = -3.70, p < .0001$.

reported the most adversarial sexual beliefs. This finding offers some support for the aggression model's assertion that media with overtly sexually violent themes will be likely to produce the strongest effects in male viewers.

In relation to acceptance of interpersonal violence, both men and women became more accepting of interpersonal violence after viewing the film; however, women's acceptance of violence decreased more than men's, as predicted in research from Malamuth and Check (1981). The fact that both men's and women's acceptance of violence increased after viewing the film provides some support for social learning theory (Bandura, 1977, 1994). Viewing the sexual violence in *The Accused* may have initiated the process of vicarious learning (i.e., sexual assault typically occurs as it was portrayed in the movie) and created more accepting attitudes toward interpersonal violence. One conceivable explanation for this type of antisocial acceptance—an increase in tolerance of interpersonal violence—is that viewers of *The Accused* might have been more forgiving of the vicious assault on Jodie Foster's character because the main male perpetrator eventually received due and adequate punishment.

An interesting and somewhat unexpected finding that emerged from the data was that men and women who viewed the edited version of the film reported more adversarial sexual beliefs than did men and women in the mosaic condition. In keeping with the prediction of aggression models and social learning, as stimulus material becomes increasingly violent, viewers' attitudes toward sexual violence should become more accepting. In our experiment, that trend held only in the uncut and mosaic conditions—participants who viewed the edited version of the film defied the trend. Some research on the cognitive impacts of editing may help to explain this unexpected difference. For example, Lang et al. (1999; Lang et al., 2000) found that cuts in films increased viewer attention and arousal during the scene in which the cutting occurred. In the edited version of *The Accused*, shots that depicted nudity or overt violence during the assault scene had been removed, but the remaining context of the scene made it apparent that a sexual assault was taking place. In keeping with the findings of Lang et al., the removal of these explicit images may have increased viewer arousal and heightened attention during the assault scene, thereby causing viewers to adopt more favorable attitudes toward adversarial sexual beliefs than would be expected.

Although several between-sex results emerged from this research, in many cases, these findings were subtle. Previous research on exposure to sexually violent material may help to explain why the sex-related findings in this research were not as profound as they have been in other studies. One reason is that, unlike the current study, most research has focused on repeated exposure to sexually violent stimulus material. Repeated exposure to sexually violent material has been shown to increase the likelihood that both sexes will believe that the rape was precipitated by the victim's actions (Goleman, 1985). Other research has demonstrated that women exposed to high doses of films that depict sexual violence against women become less likely to believe the victim was distressed by the assault (Dexter et al., 1997). In addition, some scholars have argued that *The Accused* presents its content as reality rather than entertainment (Riggs & Willoquet, 1989). However, this fact should not have been responsible for this result given the omnipresent “based on a true story” etic in many films. The focus of *The Accused* is not the brief sexual assault scene at the end of the film, but the trial of the men accused of sexually assaulting Jodie Foster's character. Because the film follows the trial, and because the perpetrators of the assault are convicted at the end, viewers may have been less likely to experience the strong effects that have emerged in past studies of exposure to sexually violent material.

Limitations

As with any study, several limitations exist. First, the sample was largely comprised of female undergraduates. Considering that more women than men are communication majors, the composition of the sample was not surprising. Nevertheless, future researchers might want to recruit a more diverse sample. That said, young adults comprise a large part of the viewing audience and the movie-going population, and sexual violence and date rape/sexual coercion continue to be campus issues. Information that can raise awareness about how men and women respond to such material is of general interest. A second potential limitation with the current study's design is that the possibility for testing effects exists, although we recognize that many published studies in this line of research followed a similar design format. Considering this potential limitation, some of the measures in the Time 1 questionnaire could have primed some participants about the nature of the

study. For this study, we were interested in the participants' immediate reactions to the material. A lag time between the treatment levels and outcome measures was not exercised in the current study given the prevalence and pervasiveness of sexual and violent material in television, film, music, the Internet, as well as the potential for crimes on campus involving sexual violence. These issues would have led to concern about confounding. Future researchers might want to consider alternative designs, such as the Solomon 4-group design to test the impact of a pretest on outcomes or a time-series design to track the impact of messages over time. Nevertheless, the information revealed from this study provides a number of insights.

Conclusion

The purpose of this investigation was to examine the impact of a manipulated sexually violent film on men's and women's attitudes toward women, beliefs in rape myths, and attitudes toward editing sexually violent films. Findings from this study suggest that men, in general, hold more traditional attitudes than women do, as well as more negative attitudes toward women, and that immediate reaction to sexually violent stimuli based on a true story exacerbates such attitudes. Women, on the other hand, seem to experience a more immediate positive attitude change toward women due to exposure to the same stimuli. Although preliminary, the findings do suggest that women respond differently than men do to more reality-based versus entertainment-based sexually violent material. It is suggested that future researchers further explore this notion as well as the long-term effects of exposure to sexually violent stimuli of this kind. Further research in this area could better inform programs that promote sexual violence awareness and interventions.

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