

Social reactions to depictions of casual and steady acquaintance rape: the impact of AIDS exposure and stereotypic beliefs about women

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People sometimes envision rape as a situation where a deranged male leaps from a dark corner or from behind a bush to force sex upon an unsuspecting woman. While stranger rape of this type does occur, the recent literature documents the more alarming incidence rate of rape that involves acquainted individuals. Muehlenhard and Linton (1987), for example, reported that 14.7% of young adult college women have been involved in unwanted sexual intercourse with someone they knew. Moreover, a national sample of more than 6100 college students revealed that 44% of the women had sex play forced upon them by a familiar individual (Koss, Digycz, & Wisniewski, 1987). Another study by Miller and Marshall (1987) indicated that roughly 10% of college women have been coerced into unwanted sex, while other research by Aizenman and Kelley (1988) indicated that approximately 22% of all college-aged women have been raped by an acquaintance. Clearly, coercive sex between acquainted individuals is a serious problem; its psychological impact is often as great as that produced by stranger rape (Koss, Dinero, Seibel, & Cox, 1988).

As distressing as rape may be for the woman sexually assaulted by an acquaintance, equally unjust is the tendency for some individuals to derogate and to devalue the victim of such an assault (e.g., L'Armand & Pepitone, 1982). Tetreault and Barnett (1987), for example, report that greater responsibility was attributed to an acquaintance-rape victim than to a stranger-rape victim. Similarly, Gerdes, Dammann, and Heilig (1988) found that whether there had been prior acquaintance between a rape victim and her male assailant influenced peoples' causal explanations of who was responsible for the rape. In particular, males were found to be more likely than females to blame a rape victim who knew her assailant. In addition, Gerdes et al. (1988) report that prior acquaintance between a rape victim and her assailant interacted with other variables (e.g., victim attractiveness) to influence peoples' judgments about the raped woman (see also Acock & Ireland, 1983; Krulewitz & Payne, 1978; Richardson & Campbell, 1982).

One explanation of this tendency for people to blame women for acquaintance rape derives from a gender role analysis (Check & Malamuth, 1983; Bridges & McGrail, 1989; Bridges, 1991). According to Check and Malamuth (1983), women and men in the United States are reared in a social environment that dictates specific sexual scripts for each gender. Women are socialized to repress the expression of their sexual desires and to restrict their participation in sexual activities. By contrast, the traditional sexual script for males encourages them to accumulate "sexual notches" by participating in sex with as many partners as possible, whether or not accompanied with intimacy and commitment. This traditional sexual script often leads men both to pressure women for sex and to

assume that women's resistance to forced sexual behavior is but token in nature. Acquaintance rape, within this traditional sexual script, is simply an extreme form of in-script sexual behavior rather than a crime committed by mentally unhealthy males. In addition, given that this traditional sexual script portrays women as exercising veto power over sexual relations (since males presumably are perpetually driven to pursue indiscriminate sexual relations), a woman who is raped by an acquaintance is thus blamed and held responsible for allowing the sexual assault to occur. Consistent with this gender role analysis are the findings that many people, also reared within the same culture that perpetuates these dysfunctional sexual scripts, attribute greater blame and responsibility to women raped by acquaintances vs. strangers (cf. Tetreault & Barnett, 1987; Gerdes et al., 1988). Other research by Check and Malamuth (1983) and Bridges and her associate (Bridges, 1991; Bridges & McGrail, 1989) more directly provides evidence consistent with the rape-supportive nature of the sexual scripts prescribed by traditional gender roles.

The purpose of the present investigation was to examine further the gender role analysis of people's tendencies both to blame women raped by an acquaintance and to hold these women personally responsible for the rape. Toward this end, we designed an investigation in which people were first classified as traditional and nontraditional based on their responses to the Beliefs About Women Scale (BAWS; Belk & Snell, 1986a). Then these traditional and nontraditional individuals were asked to read and to respond to a scenario in which a woman was raped either by a steady dating partner or else by a short-term acquaintance. The gender role analysis of rape would predict that people who adhere to sexual scripts consistent with traditional gender roles will be more likely to attribute greater responsibility for a rape to a woman who has a more lengthy vs. a more brief or casual acquaintance with her sexual assailant (Check & Malamuth, 1983; Bridges, 1991; Bridges & McGrail, 1989). Thus, one goal of the present investigation was to examine people's perceptions of victim-rapist relationships depicted as steady dating partners vs. casual acquaintances on a spontaneous "pickup" date (cf. Bridges, 1991).

The present investigation also had two additional purposes. First, we wanted to introduce a methodological advance in research on acquaintance rape. Not only did we use a variety of dependent measures designed to assess rape victim blame and character assassination (cf. Bridges & McGrail, 1989), we also directly compared the social perceptions and evaluations of the rapist and his victim through the use of a within-subjects analysis of variance. This statistical approach allowed us to directly compare the subjects' perceptions of the rapist and his victim rather than analyzing these responses in separate statistical analyses. An additional ancillary purpose of the present investigation was concerned with a more recent complication associated with rape. Fear of rape is of course a day-to-day concern for many women (Gordon & Riger, 1989). With the discovery of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), another concern has begun to compound women's fear of rape (Baker, Burgess, Brickman, & Davis, 1990). HIV is of course transmittable through rape. Women who are raped by acquaintances as well as by strangers are at risk for exposure to this life-threatening virus. In light of the serious nature of the AIDS threat to women who have been raped, we decided to incorporate an

AIDS manipulation into the present research (cf. Carroll, 1988). This was accomplished by composing the acquaintance rape scenarios so that half the stories involved a description of an exposure to AIDS and the remaining half contained no description of an AIDS exposure.

In summary, the present investigation was designed to examine the impact of stereotypic gender roles about women and AIDS exposure to observers' reactions to a rape depiction involving either steady dating partners vs. casual pick-up partners. It was expected that there would be a difference in the reactions of gender role traditional and nontraditional subjects to depictions of rape between steady dating partners vs. casual first-time acquaintances. Specifically, individuals who subscribed to traditional stereotypes about women were expected to react with less favorable reactions to the woman raped by a steady dating partner (vs. a casual pickup partner) than were individuals with nontraditional beliefs about women. With respect to the AIDS manipulation, the absence of prior relevant literature suggested the need for an exploratory approach to this variable. Thus, no explicit hypotheses were formulated regarding peoples' reactions to depictions of acquaintance rape that involved exposure to AIDS.

METHOD

Subjects

During the spring, summer, and fall of 1988, 122 undergraduate females enrolled in lower division Human Environmental Studies classes from a midwestern university in the United States were asked to volunteer to participate in a survey project concerned with human sexuality. Although actual figures were not recorded, the Human Environmental Studies classes taught by the second author are usually predominately Caucasian-American, with usually less than 10% enrollment by minority students. The average age of the subjects was 21.9 (SD = 5.05). The number of subjects in the following analyses occasionally varies because of missing data.

Overview of Design

At the beginning of the study, the subjects were asked to fill out a questionnaire assessing their gender role beliefs about women (Belk & Snell, 1986a). Then they were presented with one of four rape depictions and were asked their perceptions of the stories. The subjects were unaware of the connection between the gender role questionnaire and the rape scenarios. The independent variables were (1) gender role, (2) rape between steady dating partners vs. first-time dating partners, (3) AIDS-related exposure, and (4) rapist vs. victim perceptions. The dependent variables involved causal attributions, personality perceptions, behavioral judgments, and rape beliefs.

Procedure

All subjects were asked to read and complete a set of material included in a large envelope. The cover sheet of the enclosed booklet consisted of an informed consent sheet

(which all subjects signed), informing them that their responses would be anonymous and confidential. The next page provided a set of instructions telling the subjects how to indicate their responses on the BAWS and also asking them to indicate their age and gender on the answer sheets.

In the final section of the booklet the subjects were asked to read and to respond to a rape scenario. The instructions asked the subjects to carefully read the description until they had a clear understanding of the events. Then they were asked to respond to 18 questions that followed the scenario. The content of the scenarios varied in terms of (1) the length of time the male and female had known each other (long-term dating partners vs. casual pick-up dating partners) and (2) the outcome of the rape (AIDS was transmitted vs. not transmitted). The "long-term daters--no AIDS" version of the scenario is shown below with the changes for the other three versions enclosed in parentheses:

(Long-term Dating Condition = As usual, Bob and Sue went to a friend's house for a party) versus (First-time Dating Condition = While at a party, Sue was introduced to Bob). They talked and drank for several hours. At the end of the night Sue and Bob drove back to her home. When they got to her apartment she invited him in. They sat on the couch and had another drink. They become involved in heavy petting and then removed some of their clothing. Teasingly, Bob got on top of Sue and began tickling her. She eventually had to insist that he stop because he was hurting her. He would not stop, but proceeded to have sex with her despite her resistance. (AIDS transmission condition = Later Sue learned that she had contracted AIDS during this sexual encounter with Bob.)

After reading the description, the subjects responded to the following pairs of statements [treated as a within-subject factor in the analyses of variance (ANOVAs)~, using a 4-point Likert scale to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each of the statements (scored so that 1 is disagree and 4 is agree): (1a) Sue was responsible for what happened to herself, (1b) Bob was responsible for what happened to Sue; (2a) This event is serious for Sue, (2b) This event is serious for Bob; (3a) Sue is a likeable person, (3b) Bob is a likeable person; (4a) Sue is a respectable person, (4b) Bob is a respectable person; (5a) Intoxication contributed to Sue's behavior, (5b) Intoxication contributed to Bob's behavior; (6a) Sue deserved what happened, (6b) Bob deserved what happened; (7a) Sue is to blame for what happened, (7b) Bob is to blame for what happened; and (8a) Sue could have prevented what happened, (8b) Bob could have prevented what happened. Two other statements were also included in the study, a manipulation check for the length of relationship variable (Sue and Bob knew each other well before this night) and a statement concerned with whether the subjects considered the event to be rape (This event should be considered rape.) After responding to these two statements, the subjects were completely debriefed about the purpose of the study.

Gender Role

The instrument used to assess gender role was the BAWS (Belk & Snell, 1986a), designed to measure several stereotypic beliefs about women's personality, roles, and lifestyles. The particular BAWS subscale used in the present investigation assessed the

stereotypic notion that "women are sexual teases." A 5-point Likert scale was used to assess the subjects' responses (-2: strongly disagree; -1: slightly disagree; 0: neither agree nor disagree; +1: slightly agree; +2: strongly agree). Total subscale scores were computed by averaging the responses of the items constituting this subscale, more extreme positive (negative) scores corresponding to greater agreement (disagreement) with the stereotype that women are sexual teases (possible range, -2 to +2). In the present investigation, the subjects were classified into two gender role groups (traditional vs. nontraditional) based on a dichotomization of the scores on the BAWS "women are sexual teases" subscale (nontraditional = negative scores; traditional = scores at and above zero). Validity and reliability information for the BAWS can be found in Belk and Snell (1986a, 1986b, 1989), Belk, Snell, Holtzman, Garcia-Falconi, and Hernandez-Sanchez (1989), and Snell, Holtzman, Belk, Garcia, and Hernandez (1990).

RESULTS

The data on personality perceptions and causal explanations were analyzed by conducting a series of 2 (type of relationship: long-term dating partners vs. first-time dating partners) x 2 (rape outcome: AIDS transmission vs. no-AIDS transmission) x 2 (gender role: traditional vs. nontraditional) x 2 (person: male rapist vs. female victim) ANOVAs on each set of paired dependent variables, with the first three variables being treated as between-group factors and the fourth variable being treated as a within-subject factor. The entire set of findings is reported in the following sections, the first section concerned with the manipulation check on how long the male assailant and female victim had known each other, the second section concerned with the causal interpretations of the behaviors of the rapist and the rape victim, the third section concerned with the subjects' personality perceptions, and the fourth section concerned with whether the subjects labeled the behavior described in the rape scenario as "rape."

Relationship Manipulation Check

The manipulation check involved asking the subjects whether "Sue and Bob knew each other well before the event." A highly significant difference was found between the long-time dating condition ($M = 3.03$) and the first-time dating condition ($M = 1.02$), $F(1, 113) = 336.92$, p is less than $\sim .001$. No other main or interaction effects were statistically significant. Thus, the relationship manipulation (i.e., long-term dating vs. first-time dating partners) was highly effective.

Causal Attributions

A number of significant effects were found on the dependent measures concerned with the subjects' causal perceptions of the male sexual assailant and the sexually assaulted woman. The results for each dependent measure are presented below.

Responsible. The subjects attributed more responsibility to the rapist ($M = 3.50$) than to the rape victim ($M = 2.09$), $F(1, 113) = 164.10$, p is less than $\sim .001$, and the subjects attributed more responsibility to the pick-up daters ($M = 2.93$) than to steady daters ($M =$

2.66), $F(1, 113) = 5.83$, p is less than $\sim .02$.

The interpretations of these two main effects were qualified by two separate interactions effects. First, we found that the "type of relationship" factor interacted with the AIDS manipulation, $F(1, 113) = 4.01$, p is less than $\sim .05$. The results indicated that the subjects did not differentially ascribe responsibility for the steady-date rape vs. first-date rape when no AIDS was transmitted ($M_s = 2.77$ vs. 2.85 , respectively), but when AIDS was transmitted they did attribute greater responsibility to the first-date dyad ($M = 2.99$) than to the long-term acquaintances ($M = 2.54$).

Second, we found a statistically significant interaction effect between the "person" factor (i.e., rapist vs. victim) and the gender role factor, $F(1, 113) = 4.89$, p is less than $\sim .03$. The means revealed that although both traditional and nontraditional subjects attributed greater responsibility to the rapist ($M_s = 3.38$ and 3.64 , respectively) than to the rape victim ($M_s = 2.17$ and 2.00 , respectively), the nontraditional subjects gave greater responsibility ratings to the rapist than did the traditional subjects.

The above main effects and two-way effects associated with the type of relationship and the "gender role" factors were further qualified by a significant three-way effect among the type of relationship, the gender role, and the person factors, $F(1, 113) = 4.39$, p is less than $\sim .04$. The results are presented in Table I. An inspection of this table indicates that, for victims, traditional subjects attributed the greatest responsibility to the female who was raped by a first-time dating partner ($M = 2.37$), while nontraditional subjects attributed the least responsibility to the female who was raped by a steady TABULAR DATA OMITTED dating partner ($M = 1.71$). By contrast, traditional subjects attributed greater responsibility to the rapist who raped a woman on a first-time date ($M = 3.59$) vs. a steady dating partner ($M = 3.16$), whereas nontraditional subjects attributed greater responsibility to the male who raped his steady dating partner ($M = 3.82$) vs. the male who raped his first-time dating partner ($M = 3.47$).

Alcohol Causal Role. Two statistically significant main effects were associated with the alcohol intoxication dependent measure concerned with whether excessive alcohol consumption contributed to the behavior of the rapist/victim. The main effect for the person factor was statistically, $F(1, 113) = 9.67$, p is less than $\sim .002$, revealing that the subjects believed that alcohol intoxication contributed more to the behavior of the rapist ($M = 3.46$) than to the behavior of the rape victim ($M = 3.23$). There was also a significant main effect for type of relationship, $F(1, 113) = 13.25$, p is less than $\sim .001$, showing that the subjects believed that excessive alcohol consumption contributed more to rape between first-time daters ($M = 3.57$) than to long-term daters ($M = 3.11$). However, the interpretation of this latter main effect was qualified by a significant interaction effect between the relationship type and the person factors, $F(1, 113) = 7.22$, p is less than $\sim .008$. The results indicated that the subjects believed that excessive alcohol use by the male ($M = 3.58$) and the female ($M = 3.55$) equally contributed to the rape on their first date, but that the subjects believed that, for long-term dating partners, alcohol intoxication contributed more to the behavior of the male rapist ($M = 3.32$) than to his long-time dating victim ($M = 2.90$).

Also, the three-way effect involving gender role, person, and type of relationship was of borderline significance, $F(1, 113) = 3.33$, p is less than $\sim .071$. As can be seen in Table I, traditional and nontraditional subjects believed equally that alcohol intoxication contributed to the behavior of the woman who was raped on a first date ($M_s = 3.56$ and 3.53 , respectively), but that traditional subjects, compared to nontraditional subjects, believed that the woman's alcohol consumption contributed less to her rape by a steady dating partner ($M_s = 2.81$ and 3.00 , respectively). By contrast, traditional subjects ($M = 3.39$), compared to nontraditional subjects ($M = 3.25$), more strongly believed that alcohol intoxication contributed to the behavior of the male who raped his steady dating partner; however, both traditional subjects and nontraditional subjects believed that alcohol use contributed to the behavior of the male who raped his first-time date ($M_s = 3.63$ and 3.53 , respectively).

Rape Deserved. When asked whether the rapist and the rape victim deserved what happened to them, the subjects indicated that the people in the long-term dating dyad ($M = 1.45$) were less "deserving" of what happened to them than were the male and female in the first-time dating dyad ($M = 1.70$), $F(1, 113) = 6.37$, p is less than $\sim .02$.

A significant two-way interaction effect between the AIDS exposure and the person factors was also found for this dependent measure, $F(1, 113) = 7.12$, p is less than $\sim .009$. The results indicated that the subjects believed that the rape victim, relative to the rapist, was slightly more likely to deserve what happened when the rape did not involve the transmission of AIDS ($M_s = 1.47$ and 1.38 , respectively), whereas when the rapist transmitted AIDS to his rape victim the subjects were less likely to believe that the rape victim, relative to the rapist, deserved what happened ($M_s = 1.48$ and 1.78 , respectively).

Blameworthiness. Subjects were also asked to indicate whether they considered either the rapist or the rape victim "to blame for what happened." Among the significant effects was a two-way interaction effect between the AIDS and the relationship manipulations, $F(1, 113) = 5.99$, p is less than $\sim .016$. As Table II shows, the subjects believed that, in situations where AIDS was not transmitted, both the rapist and the rape victim in a long-term dating relationship were more to blame for what happened than were first-time dating partners (dyadic $M_s = 2.47$ and 2.32); but when the transmission of AIDS was involved, the subjects believed that the rapist and the rape victim who were first-time daters were more to blame for what happened than were the long-time dating partners (dyadic $M_s = 2.73$ and 2.31 , respectively). A significant main effect for the person factor (i.e., rapists vs. victims), $F(1, 113) = 112.31$, p is less than $\sim .001$, also revealed that the subjects attributed greater blame to the rapist ($M = 3.11$) than to his rape victim ($M = 1.84$).

However, the above two findings were qualified by a statistically significant interaction effect among the AIDS exposure, the gender role, and TABULAR DATA OMITTED the person factors, $F(1, 113) = 5.93$, p is less than $\sim .016$. The means are presented in Table III. An inspection of this table indicates that when a woman who was raped not exposed to AIDS during the rape, both nontraditional and traditional subjects were equally

unlikely to believe that she was blameworthy for her rape ($M_s = 1.93$ and 1.84), but that nontraditional subjects, relative to traditional subjects, were less likely to believe that the rape victim was blameworthy for rape that involved exposure to AIDS ($M_s = 1.55$ and 2.03 , respectively). By contrast, both nontraditional and traditional subjects believed that the male was relatively blameworthy for the non-AIDS related rape ($M_s = 2.85$ and 2.97), although nontraditional subjects, relative to traditional subjects, rated the rapist more blameworthy when he transmitted AIDS to his rape victim ($M_s = 3.58$ and 3.00 , respectively).

Behavioral Attributions. The subjects were asked whether the rapist and the woman who was raped could have prevented what happened. Both the main effects for person and relationship were statistically significant, $F(1, 113) = 53.08$, p is less than $\sim .001$; and $F(1, 113) = 10.49$, p is less than $\sim .002$; respectively. The subjects were more likely to believe that the rapist ($M = 3.74$) than the rape victim ($M = 2.94$) could have prevented what happened. Also, the subjects were more likely to believe that rape could have been prevented between first-time dating partners ($M = 3.51$) than between long-term dating partners ($M = 3.17$). However, the interpretation of both main effects was qualified by their significant interaction effect, $F(1, 113) = 8.54$, p is less than $\sim .004$. The results indicated that although the subjects believed that the male could have prevented both the long-term date rape as well as the first-time date rape ($M_s = 3.73$ and 3.76 , respectively), the subjects nonetheless believed that the rape victim was more capable of preventing the rape by a first-time dating partner ($M = 3.26$) than the rape by a long-term dating partner ($M = 2.61$).

Table III. Means Associated with the Perception of Male Rapists and Female Victims as a Function of Subject Gender Role and AIDS Exposure(a)

| Victim vs. AIDS exposure | Dependent rapist | Subject | measure ratings | gender role | No-AIDS | AIDS |
|--------------------------|------------------|---------|-----------------|-------------|---------|------|
| Blameworthy Victim | Traditional | 1.84 | 2.03 | | | |
| Nontraditional | | 1.93 | 1.55 | | | |
| Rapist | Traditional | 2.97 | 3.00 | | | |
| Nontraditional | | 2.85 | 3.58 | | | |

a $N = 31$ for traditional/no-AIDS; $n = 32$ for traditional/AIDS; $n = 27$ for nontraditional/no-AIDS; and $n = 31$ for nontraditional/AIDS. Higher (lower) scores on the statements indicate greater agreement (disagreement) with the statements (1: disagree; 4: agree).

Personality Depictions A number of significant effects were found on the dependent measures concerned with the subjects' perceptions of the personality of the sexual assailant and the sexually assaulted woman. These results are presented in the following sections.

Likeable. A few statistical significant effects were associated with the "likeable" dependent measure (i.e., how likeable was the rapist and rape victim). First, there was a significant main effect for AIDS exposure, $F(1, 112) = 4.09$, p is less than $\sim .05$, showing that the subjects considered the rape dyads as less likeable when AIDS was involved ($M = 2.59$) vs. no-AIDS related involvement ($M = 2.80$).

The main effect for the person factor was also statistically significant, $F(1, 112) = 69.40$, p is less than $\sim .001$, revealing that the rape victim ($M = 3.11$) was considered more likeable than the rapist ($M = 2.30$). However, this main effect was qualified by a significant three-way effect among the "person," the "type of relationship," and the gender role factors, $F(1, 112) = 7.06$, p is less than $\sim .009$. An inspection of the means in Table I reveals that traditional subjects perceived the woman raped on a first-time date ($M = 3.28$) as more likeable than did the nontraditional subjects ($M = 2.97$), but a woman raped by a steady date was equally liked by traditional and nontraditional subjects ($M_s = 3.00$ and 3.18 , respectively). By comparison, traditional subjects considered the male who raped his steady dating partner as more likeable ($M = 2.53$) than did nontraditional subjects ($M = 2.07$); and both traditional and nontraditional subjects equally considered the male who raped the woman on their first-date as somewhat likeable ($M_s = 2.25$ and 2.33 , respectively).

Respectable. Two statistically significant main effects were associated with the "respectable" dependent measure (i.e., how respectable was the rapist and rape victim). First, there was a significant main effect for AIDS exposure, $F(1, 112) = 4.58$, p is less than $\sim .04$, showing that the subjects considered the rape dyads as less respectable when AIDS was involved ($M = 2.16$) vs. no-AIDS related involvement ($M = 2.45$). The main effect for the person factor was also statistically significant, $F(1, 112) = 133.88$, p is less than $\sim .001$, revealing that the rape victim ($M = 2.83$) was considerably more respectable than the rapist ($M = 1.77$). However, the interpretation of these two main effects was qualified by a significant interaction effect for both factors, $F(1, 112) = 7.70$, p is less than $\sim .006$. The results indicated that first-date dyads involving the spread of AIDS were perceived as the least respectable ($M = 2.10$) while long-term dating dyads not involving AIDS were perceived as the most respectable ($M = 2.55$), with no difference between the respectability attributed to the other two dyads ($M = 2.24$ for the AIDS related long-term daters and $M = 2.34$ for the first-time daters without any AIDS transmission).

A three-way effect involving gender role, person, and type of relationship also approached significant, $F(1, 112) = 3.67$, p is less than $\sim .058$. An inspection of the means in Table I reveals that both traditional and nontraditional subjects perceived the woman raped on a first date as less respectable ($M_s = 2.66$ and 2.67 , respectively) than the woman raped by a steady date ($M_s = 2.93$ and 3.11 , respectively). By contrast, compared to traditional subjects ($M = 1.93$), nontraditional subjects rated the male who raped his steady dating partner as less respectable ($M = 1.64$); but traditional subjects ($M = 1.56$), compared to nontraditional subjects ($M = 1.93$), rated the male who raped a woman on their first date as less respectable.

Rape Dependent Measure

The last dependent measure involved asking the subjects whether they considered the events described in the vignettes as "rape." A 2 (AIDS exposure: no exposure vs. exposure) x 2 (relation: steady dating partners vs. first-time daters) x 2 (gender role: traditional vs. nontraditional) ANOVA was conducted on the subjects' responses. No main or interaction effects approached statistical significance, all $F(1, 113)$ |is less than~ 1.02, ns. Although there were no statistically significant differences among the four conditions, the actual size of the overall mean (3.54) revealed that the subjects in all conditions considered the event to be rape (where 4 = agree). Finally, only one statistically significant effect was associated with the "serious" dependent measure. The subjects considered the rape incident more serious for the female victim ($M = 3.91$) than for the rapist ($M = 3.45$), $F(1, 113) = 25.59$, p |is less than~ .001.

DISCUSSION

Although in previous times rape was sometimes construed as basically a criminal act caused by mentally deranged males, the recent literature indicates that acquaintance rape occurs more frequently than stranger rape. Although one might expect that people would sympathize with the plight of women raped by an acquaintance, quite the opposite has been found in recent research (Tetreault & Barnett, 1987; Bridges, 1991). One explanation of this tendency to view women raped by an acquaintance in an unfavorable fashion rests on a gender role socialization analysis (Check & Malamuth, 1983; Bridges, 1991; Bridges & McGrail, 1989). The current research showed that traditional stereotypes about women influenced individuals' reactions to depictions of steady date and casual date rape. Moreover, several intriguing findings associated with the AIDS exposure variable were also found. These results will be discussed separately in the following sections.

Gender Role Socialization

The present investigation revealed several important findings consistent with a gender role socialization analysis of acquaintance rape. The analyses indicated that subjects with less stereotyped beliefs about women attributed greater responsibility to rapists, relative to those subjects with more stereotypic views of women. Further, subjects who were rejecting of traditional stereotypes about women (e.g., who disbelieved that women are sexual teases) were less likely to blame a rape victim for her plight when the rape involved an exposure to an AIDS-afflicted rapist. In addition, those with nontraditional gender role views about women gave less favorable personality characterizations to the rapists when the rape was committed within the context of a steady dating relationship. These findings provide evidence supportive of a gender role socialization analysis of rape, which suggests that individuals with traditional gender role views about women will be less likely to hold rapists responsible for their sexual assaults and more likely to derogate rape victims, both in terms of the victim's degree of responsibility for the rape and the portrayal of her personality (cf. Check & Malamuth, 1983; Bridges, 1991).

The gender role findings were also associated with the type of relationship that prevailed

between the rapist and his female victim. In particular, an examination of the means presented in the tables indicates that the effects of gender role socialization occurred mainly for steady, long-term dating partners (vs. casual dating partners). Within this context, people who were nontraditional in their gender role beliefs, relative to traditional individuals, were less likely to perceive a woman as being responsible for the rape and they were more likely to judge the rapist as more responsible for the assault.

Rape: Exposure to AIDS

As noted earlier, women worry about the possibility of being raped, a threat that is now compounded in its potential for bringing harm to them by the possibility that they may be simultaneously exposed to an AIDS-afflicted rapist (Baker et al., 1990). In terms of the AIDS exposure manipulation used in the present investigation, several interesting findings did emerge. Subjects were more likely to attribute blame to both a rapist and his victim who barely knew each other (i.e., the slightly acquainted pick-up daters), particularly when the victim was raped by an AIDS-afflicted vs. an AIDS-free male. Another finding revealed that casual first-time daters, for whom a rape involved the spread of AIDS, were both derogated (i.e., judged to be less respectable), relative to the victim and rapist described in other non-AIDS related rape scenarios. Overall, these findings indicate that whether or not a woman is exposed to AIDS during a rape does influence people's reactions and judgments about the situation. Perhaps greater blame was attributed to both an AIDS-afflicted rapist and his AIDS-exposed victim who were casual pick-ups, vs. long-term dating partners, because the subjects believed that in this "AIDS era" a woman should have been more careful and cautious about involving herself with such a short-term casual acquaintance (cf. Gilmartin-Zena, 1983; Walster, 1966). Why did the subjects also attribute greater blame to a rapist who exposed his victim to AIDS (vs. not exposing her to AIDS)? There may be a simple explanation; it is lethal for the rape victim if she contracts AIDS. That is, the potential consequences are more severe for a raped woman and thus the rapist who exposes his victim to AIDS is regarded as more blameworthy.

Moreover, as described in the aforementioned section, nontraditional subjects were less likely than those with traditional views about women to attribute blame for the rape to the sexually assaulted woman who contracted AIDS. In addition, nontraditional individuals, relative to their traditional counterparts, were more likely to attribute blame to the rapist who exposed his victim to AIDS. Thus, the gender role and the AIDS-exposure variables conjointly influenced the subjects' perceptions of both the rapist's and the victim's blameworthiness. Clearly, this finding shows that the nontraditional individuals were thereby rejecting the conventional gender role perspective that derogates women who are raped. Future researchers will need to examine whether especially long prison terms for such rapists might be recommended by subjects (cf. Triplet & Sugarman, 1987). Additionally, researchers will need to examine whether other traditional views about women (such as "women are sexual teases") might mediate the sentencing of rapists who expose their victims to AIDS.

In summary, the present study was conducted to investigate the social reactions of

traditional and nontraditional female college students to descriptions of first-time casual-date rape and long-term steady-date rape that involved either AIDS transmission or no AIDS transmission. Although the results are quite informative, it is important to remember that the research design was an analogue. Thus, it is possible that people's reactions to real-life situations involving steady-date rape and first-time casual-date rape might be markedly different from those found in the present investigation. In addition, it is important to remember that the present investigation was based on the social perceptions of undergraduate women. Future research should examine whether males would respond in a similar fashion, as well as whether other personal characteristics would influence women's and men's perceptions of rape assailants and rape victims (cf. Check & Malamuth, 1983; Muehlenhard, Friedman, & Thomas, 1985). The present findings indicate that the social perception of rape may be better understood when variables such as acquaintance level and long-term sexual consequences are examined. Other variables that may provide future insight into the nature of peoples' perceptions of rape victims may include those associated with AIDS (e.g., Snell & Finney, 1990; Finney & Snell, 1989; Snell, Finney, & Godwin, 1991), gender roles (Snell, 1986, 1989), attitudes toward rape (Ward, 1988), and sexual esteem (Snell & Papini, 1989).

In brief, the present investigation has provided evidence that the social interpretation of various types of acquaintance rape may be viewed as an extension of the gender role socialization of traditional sexual scripts. The time is clearly at hand for a change in gender socialization that fosters date rape of any type (Bridges, 1991). Traditional sexual scripts are not only dysfunctional for males and females in general, but are also harmful for female rape victims in particular, especially so when they are exposed to diseases as lethal as AIDS (Lerner & Simmons, 1966; Maloney, 1988).

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