

Rowan University

Rowan Digital Works

Theses and Dissertations

5-5-1997

Date rape: attitudes and perceptions

Elizabeth Young
Rowan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd>



Part of the [Educational Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Young, Elizabeth, "Date rape: attitudes and perceptions" (1997). *Theses and Dissertations*. 2132.
<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/2132>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact graduateresearch@rowan.edu.

DATE RAPE: ATTITUDES AND
PERCEPTIONS

by Elizabeth Young

A thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree in School Psychology
of Rowan University
May 4, 1997

Approved by

Date Approved 5/5/1997

Abstract

Elizabeth Young
Date Rape: Attitudes and Perceptions
May 4, 1997
Dr. Klanderman
School Psychology

The reasons date rape victims are often blamed for their own assault may be associated with sex-role identification and a lack of education. This study aims to examine the relationship between an individual's measure of sex-role traditionality and their attitudes towards rape by using the Bem Sex-Role Inventory combined with the Rape Attitudes and Perceptions Questionnaire which were administered to two mixed gender classes consisting of 30 juniors and seniors in a rural high school. Approximately one week after the surveys are taken, both classes watched *When Romance Turns to Rape* which contains several vignettes on date rape. Then both classes once again took the Rape Attitudes and Perceptions Questionnaire. Results indicate that gender is not a determining factor in the attribution of victim blame in a date rape

scenario and that education can alter the attitudes of adolescents to become less rape tolerant of date rape. It is hoped that since this program successfully improved awareness and changed attitudes, it might inspire the contact school's board of education to develop and employ programs that are aimed to educate adolescents about the issue of date rape on a school-wide basis because this study supports the use of education on date rape during adolescence.

Mini-Abstract

Elizabeth Young
Date Rape: Attitudes and Perceptions
May 4, 1997
Dr. Klanderman
School Psychology

The reasons date rape victims are often blamed for their own assault may be associated with sex-role identification and a lack of education. Results indicate that gender is not a determining factor in the attribution of victim blame in a date rape scenario and that education can alter the attitudes of adolescents to become less rape tolerant of date rape; therefore, this study supports the use of education on date rape during adolescence.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: The Problem	
Need	1
Purpose	2
Hypothesis	3
History	4
Definitions	7
Sampling and Methodology	8
Overview	9
Chapter 2: Review of Literature	
Blaming the Victim	10
Victim's Characteristics	12
Token Resistance	15
Summary	17
Chapter 3: Design of the Study	
Sample	19
Methodology	20
Measures	21
Design	21
Testable Hypotheses	23
Summary	24
Chapter 4: Analysis of Results	
Restatement of Hypotheses	25
Interpretation of Results	26
Statements of Significance	27
Summary	27
Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusions	
Summary	28
Conclusions	29
Discussion	30
Implications for Further Study	31
References	33

Chapter I: The Problem

Need

The belief that most rapes are perpetrated by a stranger against a stranger is a stereotype that is not supported by numerous studies, yet the general public's perception of a stereotypical rapist consisting of the widely held view that rapists are maniacal wolves hiding somewhere in the bushes waiting for an innocent victim to pass by is still prevalent. In a study of over 6000 college students an estimated one in four women reported having been raped by an acquaintance; over 50% have experienced sexual aggression; and 84% knew their attackers (Ward, et al, 1991). With evidence that estimates 35% to 85% of all rapes are perpetrated by someone known to the victim (Koss, et al, 1987) which is in direct contrast with popular belief, it could be suggested that one of the factors

contributing to the incidence of rape could be the misguided public perceptions of the rape scenario. Although "stranger rape" does occur, its occurrence is haphazard; whereas, "acquaintance rape" often occurs as a result of miscommunication, both verbal and nonverbal, between males and females which is catalyzed by communication styles and disparate expectations unique to each gender. Since the assailant in stranger rape is unknown to the victim and it is estimated that in most incidents, the victim knows the assailant, attempts to decrease the incidence of rape might first target the known assailant, the acquaintance. In addition, a change in public perception of victim blame is also needed.

Purpose

If a date turns to violence and rape, some sort of misperception and miscommunication must have occurred; therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the variance between male and female perceptions of not only the dating scenario but also the variance of their perceptions of each other and the variance of their expectations of each other in a dating situation. In cases of date rape, the incidence that occurred is the same, yet the male and the female hold dissimilar perceptions of the same event. Thus there must be reasons that explain this disparity.

Hypothesis

Males and females hold disparate expectations towards dating and do not use communication to effectively clarify each other's desires and expectations. Both the male and the female, possibly unknowingly, adhere to the rape myth paradigm and traditional sex role identification. Greater adherence to the rape myth paradigm and traditional sex role stereotypes increases the likelihood that a date rape or a violent situation could occur because there is a greater disparity of understanding between the genders. Date rape occurs as a result of a lack of knowledge of how to read a partner's expectations, the inability to communicate effectively one's needs and boundaries, and the inability to to effectively identify and deal with potential "rape" situations. Date rape is more likely to happen in male/female relationships that involve males and females who hold traditional sex role stereotypes and inhibited communication styles than in relationships that involve males and females who do not hold traditional sex role stereotypes and have less inhibited communication styles; furthermore, people who adhere to more traditional sex role views and the rape myth paradigm are more likely to blame the victim. It is also hypothesized that if youths are presented information that asks them to

examine their belief systems surrounding dating and gender expectations, and then educated about how to communicate more clearly and effectively with a date partner, traditional attitudes and perceptions surrounding date rape which are associated with the date rape paradigm may be changed to incline towards a less sexist orientation; therefore, the degree to which an individual adheres to the rape myth paradigm and blames the victim will decrease.

History

Not so long ago the Senate approved the Criminal Code Reform Act of 1978 which restricts the questioning of sexual assault victims about their past sexual conduct and removes the requirement that a rape victim's testimony be corroborated in federal rape cases (Glazer,1994). In addition, what a woman was wearing at the time of the rape has also been deemed irrelevant in rape cases. But these rulings have only recently adjudicated the rights of the rape victim dramatically altering the nature of the rape victim's courtroom experience. In fact, for many years it was believed, and in some circles it still is believed, that if a woman dresses somewhat provocatively, if she goes out of her house unescorted at night, drinks alcohol or if she is sexually active, etc., the woman had it (rape)

coming to her or she should have expected it. Only recently, in the face of much debate, has the general public begun to recognize that a woman's dress, independence, and sexuality are not mitigating factors in a woman's victimization. Still public perception has a long way to go when it comes to the discussion of acquaintance rape. In a recent study 30% of the college students queried felt that if the rape takes place in the woman's home and she knows her assailant, then it was her responsibility (Prolte, et al., 1993) which indicates the presence of the rape myth paradigm in the subjects' belief system. If a woman invites a man into her home, does that mean she should expect to be raped?

In the 1980's the term "date rape" was first introduced by the psychologist Mary P. Koss who used the term for the first time in a *Ms.* magazine article. In 1985 a nationwide survey of college campuses by Koss concluded that 1 in 4 college women have experienced rape or attempted rape (Koss,1985). Under new federal requirements, all colleges must have a written policy on date rape. Thus many programs have been developed and much research has focused on the issue of date rape. For example, Antioch College developed the "verbal consent" code that requires a question/answer scenario seeking verbal consent during sexual activity.

While actual legal definitions of rape may vary from state to state most legal statutes require some sort of resistance on the part of the woman. The prerequisite proof of resistance aspect of current law stems "from the 17th century traditional view of English courts that the victim's testimony could not be trusted" as she might lie to protect her honor (Glazer, 1994). A woman's attempt to resist her assailant has continued to be a key intervening factor in the attribution of victim blame in rape cases and popular opinion. Another contributory factor is the victim's fear of being assaulted by the legal process: many rape victims refuse to prosecute their assailants because of the prevalence of misogynistic attitudes and proceedings which put the victim on trial. Unfortunately attitudes like these remain and contribute to the underreporting of rape, acquaintance or stranger. Finally, it should be noted that attempts to ameliorate the tendency to blame the female victim does not and should not condone reverse discrimination with the placing of blame solely on the male in an acquaintance rape either. Both genders need to be educated about how to communicate more effectively and openly with each other in all areas of life but especially in the sexual arena; thus, a tendency to be able to communicate effectively about human sexuality and a tendency to hold more liberal sex role attitudes may decrease the number of

incidences of date rape. The presence of date rape in our society demands that human sexuality in America be freed from its double standards and Puritan heritage.

Definitions

Rape is "the penetration against consent through force, threat of force, or when a victim was incapacitated with alcohol or drugs (Koss, 1985). The difference between date or acquaintance rape and stranger rape is identified by the victim's relationship with their assailant; that is, the victim knows or recognizes their assailant or does not know their assailant, respectively. Consent is the ability to say either yes or no and have either accepted. The "rape myth" consists partly of the idea that even if a woman says "no" she means "yes." "Token resistance" is the use of resistance to sexual advances by a female when in fact the female desires further sexual advances. "Perceived token resistance" is the male's perception of the female's resistance as her attempt to maintain social respectability rather than an actual attempt to thwart the male's further sexual advances.

Sampling and Methodology

This study involves 30 subjects who are juniors and senior males and females attending a rural high school in the Eastern United States. Prior to introducing the survey, the option of not participating will be presented. Initially, a survey that aims to identify traditional sex role attitudes (Bem's Sex Role Inventory) and attitudes towards rape (Burt's Rape Attitudes Survey) will be administered. Following the surveys a brief introduction of the topic of date rape and dating violence and a legal definition of date rape will be provided. After the passage of one week, the students will watch the video *When Romance Turns to Rape* which contains a date rape and an attempted date rape and also contains additional information aimed to increase awareness about how both genders can decrease the chances that they will be involved in a date rape. The video contains two vignettes (one where the date rape occurs and one where the male's attempts at sexual intercourse are thwarted). In the video the female is provocatively dressed, under the influence of alcohol, and in her own home while her parents are out of town. Immediately following a brief discussion of the topic, the same subjects will once again complete the Rape Attitudes and Perceptions questionnaire. Following the film for both groups, information about agencies and phone

numbers to contact for further understanding or assistance will end the 50 minute period.

Overview

A discussion of research that has a central focus of examining the relationship between the presence or absence of traditional attitudes and a subject's willingness to blame the victim will be examined. Additional research which explores the relationship between an individual's attitudes towards rape and their willingness to blame the victim giving the role of the victim's responsibility in the rape an exaggerated emphasis will be also discussed in the review of the literature. A description of the sample size, population, the inventories used and a examination of methodology will follow as does a discussion of the findings and the areas in need of further research. It is desired that this study may persuade the contact school's board of education to develop additional schoolwide programs on and related to this issue.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Blaming the Victim

Contrary to popular opinion "acquaintance rape is the most common type of rape, accounting for 70%-80% of rape center contacts" (Davis et al, 1993). Ironically, rape victims are more likely than victims of any other crime to be held responsible and even accused of encouraging their attack (Abbey, 1987). The high percentage of rapes which are date rapes and the public's attitude towards rape victims may be due in part to the prevalence of rape tolerant attitudes in America.

Rape tolerant attitudes fall under three broad headings: adversarial sexual beliefs (e.g. women provoke rape; women give double messages), traditionality (e.g., men should be aggressive and women submissive; men

should pay for and initiate dates) and acceptance of rape stereotypes (e.g., rape only occurs when the assailant has a weapon; a prostitute can not be raped) (Holcomb et al, 1991). If a woman is raped by someone she knows the fact that the assailant is an acquaintance does not lessen the crime, but popular opinion suggests that society "may perceive date rape as a less serious event than stranger rape" (Gillen and Muncer, 1995). Studies which focus on the role of the victim and the victim's characteristics show widespread evidence of the existence of the rape myth paradigm which include the beliefs that "most rape claims are false; that the victim provoked the rape and is responsible for what happened; or that women act as if they do not want sexual aggression, but they really enjoy it" (Newman et al, 1994). In Davis, Peck and Storment's 1993 study of 237 high school students who responded to a questionnaire which describes a variety of situational descriptors varying from woman's dress to a woman's previous sexual activity, 60% of the boys said it was acceptable for a boy to force sex on a girl in more than one of the situations (Davis, et al, 1993). In another study, a shocking 59% of the college men queried responded affirmatively when questioned if they would rape a woman as the man did in the date rape vignette that they read during the study if they were assured no one would know and they would not be punished

(Quackenbush, 1991).

Attributions of victim blame originate from a society that "when it comes to women and sex, consent is presumed" (Estrich, 1987); In fact, studies have shown that the rape myth paradigm is highly operational in modern American society. Males are consistently more likely to attribute blame on the victim based on the victim's level of respectability (Gillen and Muncer, 1995). Burt's 1980 study of a random sample of Minnesota residents found that over half of the subjects agreed with statements that suggest that women are responsible for being raped or that at least 50% of reported rapes are false (Burt, 1980). In Holcomb's study, one in four men agreed that rape is provoked by the victim, that any woman could prevent rape if she really wanted to; and that women frequently cry rape falsely. Moreover, approximately one in three men felt that aggressiveness was tied closely to masculinity and one in two men felt that women ask for and enjoy rape (Holcomb et al, 1991).

Victim's Characteristics

The influence of a victim's attire was also explored as related to the attribution of victim responsibility with the use of a short vignette which describes a date rape combined with one of three situations: subjects

were given a photograph of the victim dressed provocatively, subjects were given a photograph of the victim dressed conservatively, and subjects were given no photograph. Results indicated that subjects were influenced by the victim's dress and were more likely to blame the victim when she was dressed provocatively (Cassidy and Hurrell,1995).

In addition, men will and do interpret who initiates a date, where the couple goes, and who pays the expenses for the date as cues that indicate how much a woman wants sex. In a short vignette subjects were given the same situation with variations of where the couple goes at the conclusion of the date: male college students were more likely to assign blame to the woman if she invites the male to her apartment or willingly enters the male's apartment alone inferring that males perceive her behavior as an indicator that she did want to have sexual intercourse (Proite et al, 1993). In another study males reasoned that when there was an opportunity for a sexual encounter (ie., the couple is at his home when his parents are not) that the female must be sexually willing. Furthermore, if a male spent money on a female and the female fights off his advances, coercive behavior on the male's part should be expected (Feltey et al, 1991) inferring that males have certain sexual rights in a dating relationship.

Attitudes toward the use of sexual coercion, the age of subject and the victim's use of alcohol are also relevant to the issue of attitudes towards rape. Gender was the leading variable and age was the second leading factor with regards to the acceptability of coercive behavior in a sexual situation: meaning that the older a subject is the less likely they are to view sexual coercion as appropriate behavior (Feltey, Ainslie, and Gieb, 1991). Female respondents who reported being forced into sex with a date tend to socialize more with their peers and tend to drink significantly more frequently than their peers who reported no such sexual coercion. In addition, this same population reported that under the influence of alcohol they had engaged in sexual behavior that they would not normally have engaged in (Canterbury et al, 1993). Under the influence of sexually coercive behavior, women may initially resist further sexual advances but eventually yield to their partner's demands. Unfortunately it is this very behavior which may be a primary factor that leads to the miscommunication which results in a date rape. A group of subjects (36.9% of the males and 21.1% of the females) when queried about traditionality in male-female communication responded that when a woman says no to having sex, she means maybe or even yes (Holcomb, 1991) describing what some researchers have come to label "token

resistance."

Token Resistance

Token resistance (women saying no when they actually want to have sexual intercourse) does occur, but women most often use it to manipulate their partner after they already have an active sexual relationship and have had sexual intercourse with that same partner on another occasion in order to manipulate that same partner to further "arouse their partner" (Sholland and Hunter, 1995). Communication problems develop when men perceive a woman's real resistance as token resistance. From a behavior modification framework, Marx (1995) noted that this perceived token resistance may cause a loss in the believability of a woman's resistance because the shaping process may cause extinction of the appropriate male response to the female's verbal "no" thus causing the woman's pleas for the male to stop to lose their power and import. In other words a female's verbal "no" that is responded to with more aggressive behavior and persistence on the part of the male may in fact be sexually reinforced by the female's eventual willingness to have sexual intercourse. Thus the male may learn that "increasingly assertive behavior results in reinforcement" (Marx and Gross, 1995). The type of resistance that stands

out as an exception is when a woman uses both verbal and physical cues to indicate that she does not want to have sexual intercourse (Feltey, Ainslie, and Gieb, 1991). In addition, the earlier the onset of victim protest and the degree of force used by the perpetrator are key mediating factors in the attribution of victim blame (Langley et al, 1991).

The male's misperception and misunderstanding of token resistance plays a key role in the disparity of perception between victim and assailant which may be somehow guided by an inconsistency in expectations and societal influences. A full 40% of the women studied admitted to engaging in sexual intercourse in order to maintain the relationship even though they did not want to have sexual relations. In this same study it was indicated that during early dating (dates 1-4) most men and women feel that sexual intercourse is inappropriate; however, almost half of the men questioned believed that by the fifth date sexual intercourse is appropriate; whereas, only 23% of the women agreed with this view (Shotland and Hunter, 1995). This inconsistency of expectations is further exacerbated by the verbal miscommunications resulting from both the male's personal experience with perceived token resistance and the sexual double standard that exists in American society. Thus it becomes a vicious cycle of interpersonal miscues urged on and supported

by overt messages present in the larger context of social attitudes which degrades women through sexual objectification and then doubts their veracity. Fortunately, subjects with less traditional gender role attitudes toward women are less likely to attribute responsibility to the woman (Proite, Dannels and Benton, 1993); however, traditionality is still operant in modern America.

Summary

This study aims to examine the relationship between an individual's measure of sex role traditionality and their attitudes towards rape. The Bem Sex-Role Inventory combined with the Rape Attitudes and Perceptions Questionnaire will be administered to two mixed gender classes consisting of juniors and seniors in a rural high school. Approximately one week after the surveys are taken, both classes will watch a video on date rape. Following the video a brief discussion on the topic of date rape will take place and the subjects will once again take the Rape Attitudes and Perceptions Questionnaire. Following a careful examination of the data the results will be returned and discussed with the students. It is hoped that if this program successfully improves awareness and changes attitudes that it might inspire the contact school's board of education to develop

and implement schoolwide programs focusing on this issue.

Chapter 3: Design of Study

Sample

Participants are 30 public high school students, 17 females and 13 males, ages vary from 16 to 18 years of age, in their third year of high school who are members of the school's Life Management class. Although date rape is part of this course's curriculum the students had not yet discussed the topic of date rape in this class prior to the research investigation. The home school insisted on this limitation of this study to students in the school's Life Management class due to the controversial nature of the research topic.

The home school is located in a rural area in the eastern time zone of the United States. The population contains a wide variety of racial

backgrounds and socioeconomic classes. The community, although rurally located and primarily agriculturally based, contains several bedroom communities of families who work in the upper echelon of corporate America.

Methodology

As previously stated, students in the school's Life Management class were asked to participate in a study on date rape. Those who participated did so on a voluntary basis. The teacher of the class administered the study and seriously attempted to present the information in an identical manner to both classes.

Students were requested to create a personal code that only they would know in order to allow for further investigation after the period of a week's passage of time and to use that code so that questionnaires could be correlated. Initially, the students completed the BEM-SRI and the Rape Attitudes and Perceptions (RAP) questionnaires. One week later the students watched the video *When Romance Turns to Rape*. After watching the video they once again completed the Rape Attitudes and Perceptions questionnaire. Immediately following the completion of the repeated measure, students began further discussion on the topic of date rape and

information was disseminated to the students about where to go for help and possible ways to avoid a date rape.

Measures

The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BemSRI) which has a test-retest reliability coefficient of .85 for females and .86 for males will be used in the initial categorization of the subjects into androgynous and traditional sex-role identification groupings. Then these same subjects will complete the pretest and posttest using the Rape Attitudes and Perceptions (RAP) Questionnaire which contains twenty forced choice items and has been found to have an internal reliability Cronbach alpha coefficient of .74 and a Guttman split-half reliability estimate of .75.

Design

This study is a repeated measure study which expects that the level of victim blame will decrease after the students watch and receive instruction about the topic of date rape; therefore, for this stage of analysis a T-test will be employed because each student's responses will be compared on a one on one basis checking for the effect that watching the video and the following discussion may have had on that particular

student's attitudes towards victim blame. Thus it is suggested that a comparison of before video-discussion versus after video-discussion of the same student's responses will be positively correlated. The greater the degree of change in a positive direction the greater the change in their tendency to blame the date rape victim which indicates that the video/discussion had a positive effect on them and increased their understanding of the topic.

The second area of concern examines each subject's self-perception of their own levels of traditionality versus androgyny. It is posited that the higher the level of traditionality in the subject's personality, the more likely they are to attribute blame to the date rape victim because they are more likely to hold the tradition-based attitudes that are associated with the rape myth paradigm; therefore, the Bem-SRI and both the pretest RAP and the posttest RAP responses will be analyzed in relationship to each other using a T-test analysis.

Testable Hypothesis

Null Hypotheses

- 1) Subjects who hold traditional sex role identifications are no different in their likelihood to attribute blame on the victim of date rape from subjects who hold androgynous sex role identifications.
- 2) Subjects who watch the video *When Romance Turns to Rape* and discuss the issue of date rape will not change their attitudes towards victims of date rape.

Alternate Hypotheses

- 1) Subjects who hold traditional sex role identifications are different in their likelihood to attribute blame on the victim of date rape from subjects who hold androgynous sex role identifications.
- 2) Subjects who watch the video *When Romance Turns to Rape* and discuss the issue of date rape will change their attitudes towards victims of date rape.

Summary

Since sex role identification can bias judgement, the attempt to categorize subjects according to their sex role identification may indicate the direction or causatory nature of the attribution of victim blame. In addition, the use of educational material to provide a foundation for discussion is sometimes questioned when the subject of the material is controversial in nature. In the case of this study the use of a pretest before watching the video and the posttest after watching the video will hopefully show that the subjects were influenced by the video to develop less rape tolerant attitudes.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Results

Restatement of Hypotheses

Null Hypotheses

- 1) Subjects who hold traditional sex role identifications are no different in their likelihood to attribute blame on the victim of date rape from subjects who hold androgynous sex role identifications.
- 2) Subjects who watch the video *When Romance Turns to Rape* and discuss the issue of date rape will not change their attitudes towards victims of date rape.

Alternate Hypotheses

- 1) Subjects who hold traditional sex role identifications are different in their likelihood to attribute blame on the victim of date rape from subjects who hold androgynous sex role identifications.

2) Subjects who watch the video *When Romance Turns to Rape* and discuss the issue of date rape will change their attitudes towards victims of date rape.

Interpretation of Results

The initial null hypothesis is rejected because no statistical degree of difference was shown to exist between the scores on the RAP of the subjects identified as androgynous and those subjects identified as traditional by the BemSRI.

The second null hypothesis is accepted because as shown in table 4.1 the t-value of -4.22 ,p..000 at a 29 degree of difference is statistically significant.

Table 4.1: The relationship between variable 2 (RAP pretest) and variable 3 (RAP posttest)

t-tests for paired samples

variable	Number of pairs	Corr	sig	2-tail	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
variable 2	30	.802	.000		13.5667	2.861	.522
variable 3					14.9000	2.564	.468

Paired Differences

Mean	SD	SE of Mean	t-value	df	2-tail Sig
-1.33	1.729	.316	-4.22	29	.000
95%	(-1.979,	-.688)			

Statements of Significance

The first hypothesis is rejected in that no significant relationship was shown to exist between the subject's level of androgyny and the subject's willingness to blame the date rape victim. The second hypothesis is accepted because a significant relationship between the pretest and the posttest scores (see table 4.1) was evidenced indicating that watching the educational video and discussing the topic does, in a general sense, reduce the subject's tendency to attribute blame in a date rape scenario. In other words the subjects became less tolerant of the rape myth paradigm and became less rape tolerant in their attributions of responsibility for behavior.

Summary

The data does not show that a relationship exists between a person's level of androgyny and their likelihood to blame the date rape victim; however, a relationship between a teenager watching a date rape prevention video and their likelihood to blame the date rape victim does exist.

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusions

Summary

Contrary to popular opinion "acquaintance rape is the most common type of rape, accounting for 70%-80% of rape center contacts" (Davis et al, 1993). Ironically, rape victims are more likely than victims of any other crime to be held responsible and even accused of encouraging their attack (Abbey, 1987). The high percentage of rapes which are date rapes and the public's attitude towards rape victims may be due in part to the prevalence of rape tolerant attitudes in America. This study aimed to examine the relationship between an individual's measure of sex-role traditionality and their attitudes towards rape. The Bem Sex-Role Inventory combined with the Rape Attitudes and Perceptions Questionnaire was administered to two mixed gender classes consisting of juniors and seniors in a rural high school. Approximately one week after the

initial surveys were taken, the the RAP was administered again after the subjects watched a video on date rape. Once analyzed, the data did not show that a relationship exists between a person's level of androgyny and their likelihood to blame the date rape victim; however, the video and the discussion on date rape did seem to alter the teenager's attitudes which is evidenced by their attitudes becoming less rape tolerant. However this change does not seem to be related to the teenager's measure of sex role identification and the change in their attitude does not appear to be influenced by their gender affiliations. The fact that the relationship between a teenager watching a date rape prevention video and their likelihood to blame the date rape victim does exist may suggest that the use of date rape prevention videos in the public high school environment can be effective.

Conclusions

- 1) Surprisingly and in direct contrast with previous studies (Proite, Dannells and Benton, 1993), sex role identification and degrees of femininity, masculinity, and androgyny did not seem to influence the presence or absence of rape tolerant attitudes in this adolescent population.

2) Education, in the form of a video and class discussion about a very controversial and personal topic, did seem to influence this adolescent populations attitudes towards the date rape victim.

Discussion

Previous research has indicated that gender bias may influence attitudes towards date rape and victim blame; however, this was not shown to be a characteristic of this study's population which may be due to their age-related attribute of egocentricity. Youths of this age group often find it challenging to put themselves in other people's positions. In addition, youths are also still in search of self-definition in terms of their sexuality and social values. It is also important to note that the fact that this study does not support those findings does not necessarily cast doubt on previous research because the acceptance of the null hypothesis does not automatically cause a rejection of the alternate hypothesis.

However, the rejection of the second null hypothesis does indicate that these teenagers were influenced by the video and the class discussion. This suggests that education on a controversial topic such as date rape does have an effect on adolescent populations. It is therefore

hoped that school boards might take a more progressive stance on the advocacy of the development of age appropriate programs as it seems that programs like the one used in this study could possibly eliminate or at least reduce the incidence of date rape amongst adolescents. It is also worth noting that the attitudes of both genders were somewhat equally affected.

Implications for Further Study

This study is limited primarily due to the size and type of population; therefore, a larger and more varied adolescent population in terms of geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic background should be studied before such programs are employed on a wider basis. Adolescence is a very fragile time period when youngsters are just beginning to understand the relationship between the sexes, so the implementation of date rape education programs should be studied more thoroughly. It might also be interesting to work with an even younger population of adolescents (ages 12-14) and contrast the results with the age group (ages 17-18) represented in this study.

Other areas of concern might include questions pertaining to individual sexual experiences, sexual orientation and religious background.

Greater care could also be taken so that the discussion is more guided and controlled to insure that variation between classes and presentations can be reduced or eliminated. In addition, the use of role play and alternative teaching modalities, such as cooperative learning, may personalize and therefore allow students to internalize their educational experience. Finally, a longitudinal study that traces the stability of the change toward a less rape tolerant attitude could substantiate the need for date rape education during the age of adolescence.

References

- Abbey, A., Cozzarelli, C., McLaughlin, K. and Harnish, R. (1987) The effects of clothing and dyad sex composition on perceptions of sexual intent: Do women and men evaluate these cues differently? *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 17, 108-126.
- Bem, Sandra Lipsitz. *Bem Sex-Role Inventory*. 1978, 1981. Consulting Psychologists Press Inc., Distributed by Mind Garden Palo Alto, California.
- Burt, M.R. (1980) Cultural myths and supports for rape. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38, 217-230.
- Canterbury, R.J., Grossman, S.J., and Llyod, E. (1993) Drinking behaviors and lifetime incidents of date rape among high school graduates upon entering college. *College Student Journal*, 75-84.
- Cassidy, Linda and Hurrell, Rose Marie. (1995) The influence of victim's attire on adolescents' judgement of date rape. *Adolescence*, 30:118, 319-323.
- Davis, Terry C., Peck, Gary Q., Stormont, John M. (1993) Acquaintance rape and the high school student. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 22A, 220-224.
- Estrich, S. (1987) *Real Rape*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Feltey, Kathryn M., Ainslie, Julie J., and Geib, Aleta. (1991) Sexual coercion attitudes among high school students: The influence of gender and rape education. *Youth and Society*, 23, 229-250.
- Gillen, K. and Muncer, S.J. (1995) Sex differences in the perceived causal structure of date rape: A preliminary report. *Aggressive Behavior*, 21, 101-112.
- Glazer, Carol A. (1985) The relationship between sex-role orientation and resolution of eriksonian developmental crises. *Sex-Roles*, 13, 653-661.

- Holcomb, Derek R., Holcomb, Linda C., Sondag, K. Anne, and Williams, Nancy. (1991) Attitudes about date rape: Gender differences among college students. *College Student Journal*, 434-439.
- Koss, M. (1985) The hidden rape victim: Personality, attitudinal and situational characteristics. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 9, 193-212.
- Langley, Travis, Yost, Elizabeth, O'Neal, Edgar C., Taylor S. Levi, Frankel, Paul I., and Craig, K.M. (1991) Models of rape judgement: Attributions concerning event, perpetrator, and victim. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 17, 43-54.
- Marx, Brian P. and Gross, Alan M. (1995) Date rape: An analysis of two contextual variables. *Behavior Modification*, 19, 451-463.
- Newman, Bernie Sue, and Colon, Israel. (1994) Beliefs about rape among college males: A revision of the rape myth acceptance scale. *College Student Journal*, 28, 10-17.
- Proite, Rosanne, Dannells, Micheal, and Benton, Stephen L., (1993) Gender, sex-role stereotypes, and the attribution of responsibility for date and acquaintance rape. *Journal of College Student Development*, 34, 411-417.
- Shotland, R. Lance and Hunter, Barbara. (1995) Women's "token resistant" and compliant sexual behaviors are related to uncertain sexual intentions and rape. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 226-236.
- Quackenbush, Robert L. (1991) Attitudes of college men toward women and rape. *Journal of College Student Development*, 32, 376-377.

