

Sex Role Stereotyping and Reactions to Depictions of Stranger Versus Acquaintance Rape

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The sex role socialization analysis of rape implies that the situational context in which a rape is portrayed as well as individual differences in sex role stereotyping may affect reactions to rape. To test these hypotheses college students were tested and classified as either high or low in sex role stereotyping. They were then randomly assigned to read one of three sexual depictions (mutually consenting intercourse vs. stranger rape vs. acquaintance rape) and were asked to indicate their sexual arousal and perceptions of the depictions. Male subjects were also asked to indicate the likelihood of their committing rape if they could be assured that no one would know. The results indicated sexual arousal and perceptual differences in reactions to the acquaintance rape versus stranger rape situations, and as expected, these reactions were mediated by subjects' sex role stereotyping. Most notably, high sex role stereotyping individuals showed sexual arousal patterns equivalent to those typically found with identified rapist populations. As well, 44% of the men in this group indicated some likelihood of raping.

A number of writers have suggested that rape is in many respects a logical extension of our sex role socialization processes that legitimize coercive sexuality (Burt, 1980; Clark & Lewis, 1977; Diamond, 1980; Russell, 1975; Weis & Borges, 1973). According to this analysis, the traditional sexual scripts (Gagnon & Simon, 1973) with which men and women are frequently raised dictate that women are not supposed to indicate directly their sexual interest or to engage freely in sexuality. Men, on the other hand, are taught to take the initiative and to persist in attempts at sexual intimacy even when a woman indicates verbally that she is unwilling to have

sex (presumably because of the male belief that a woman's initial resistance is only token). The result of these sex role socialization processes, according to theory, is a rape-supportive culture wherein sexual coercion is seen as normal and acceptable in-role behavior. Within this sex role model, therefore, rape is seen as only one (extreme) point on a continuum of in-role, forced sexual behaviors rather than a discrete, deviant act committed by only a few mentally ill men.

Sex Roles and Acquaintance Rape

An important implication of the sex role socialization analysis of rape is that sex role socialization processes are most likely to influence behavior within the "date-" or acquaintance-rape situation, as contrasted with the stranger-rape situation. It has been argued that many of our cultural beliefs about the dating situation (e.g., a woman does not really mean it when she says no) are a function of sex role stereotypes and can often lead to misunderstandings in the dating situation or even to rape (Bernard, 1969; Brodyaga, Gates, Singer, Tucker, & White, 1975; Medea & Thompson, 1974; Russell, 1975; Weis & Borges, 1973). Consistent with this analysis

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is the fact that researchers have estimated that about half of all reported rapes are committed by someone the victim knows (Amir, 1971; Kanin, 1957, 1967; Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957). There are also data to indicate that many people do not even consider acquaintance rape to be "real" rape (Klemmack & Klemmack, 1976; Zellman, Goodchilds, Johnson, & Giarrusso, Note 1). That misunderstandings can occur in dating situations is evidenced by Burt's (1980) finding that over half of her sample of Minnesota residents agreed with the statement, "A woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on the first date implies she is willing to have sex." Similarly, Abbey (1982) showed that men often misperceive women's friendliness in social interactions as a sign of sexual interest.

Although these data are consistent with the hypothesis that sex role socialization processes are most likely to operate in the acquaintance-rape situation, there has to date been no direct empirical test of this notion. One purpose of the present experiment, therefore, was to examine more closely differences in people's reactions to stranger- versus acquaintance-rape situations. We expected that because most individuals reared in North American culture reflect that culture's sex role patterns, there would be a general difference in reactions to stranger versus acquaintance rape. More importantly, as detailed further below, we expected that individual differences in sex role stereotyping inclinations¹ would magnify these differential reactions to stranger as contrasted with acquaintance rape.

Sex Role Stereotyping

Despite the theoretical significance that sex role stereotypes have for understanding the causes of rape, there has been little empirical research addressed to this issue. In one study Burt (1980) found some empirical support. Using a large representative sample of Minnesota residents, Burt showed that both men's and women's sex role stereotyping beliefs were positively correlated with attitudes indicative of rape-myth acceptance, acceptance of violence (primarily against women), and the belief that sex relations are adver-

sarial in nature. Although these data can be taken as evidence for the interrelatedness of sex role stereotyping and rape-supportive attitudes, there exists a need to validate further the sex role socialization hypothesis using measures that are more directly related to rape than are attitudes. A second purpose of the present investigation, therefore, was to examine the relation between sex role stereotyping and a number of measures previously shown to relate to rape.

The Measurement of Rape

Although the ideal criterion variable in rape research would involve actual observations of rapes, such research is not feasible. Consequently, rape researchers must rely on indirect measures. Three such measures that have received attention in the literature are sexual arousal to rape depictions, perceptions of rape victims, and men's self-reported likelihood of raping. Evidence for the validity of each measure is briefly reviewed.

Sexual Arousal to Rape Depictions

Recent research by Abel, Barlow, Blanchard, and Guild (1977) and others (Abel, Becker, Blanchard, & Djenderedjian, 1978; Barbaree, Marshall, & Lanthier, 1979; Hinton, O'Neill, & Webster, 1980; Quinsey, Chaplin, & Varney, 1981) suggested that rapists may be differentiated from nonrapists on the basis of sexual arousal measures. Specifically, rapists showed about equal levels of sexual arousal to both rape and consenting-intercourse depictions, whereas nonrapists showed lower (inhibited) levels of arousal to

¹ Although Burt (1980) refers to her Sex-Role Stereotyping scale as an attitude measure, we have chosen to avoid the use of the term *attitude* in the present context. As Fishbein and Ajzen (1972) suggested, stereotyping is primarily a cognitive matter (one ascribes qualities, behaviors, motivations, etc., to a person on the basis of a simple categorization), whereas *attitude* has come to refer to a pro-con feeling or affect. Because the present discussion is restricted to the cognitive implications of sex role stereotyping as they pertain to rape, it would be misleading to use the term *attitude*. At the same time, however, we would not preclude the possibility that affect plays a role in the relation between sex roles and rape, in view of Check and Malamuth's (Note 2) finding that stereotyped sex role beliefs are associated with men's hostility toward women.

rape relative to consenting-intercourse depictions. On the basis of such findings, these researchers employed measures of sexual arousal in response to rape versus consenting-intercourse depictions in diagnosing and treating rapists. Similarly, measures of arousal to child versus adult sexual stimuli have been found to be useful in diagnosing and treating child molesters, as well as in predicting recidivism (Abel, Becker, Murphy, & Flanagan, 1981; Quinsey, Chaplin, & Carrigan, 1980).

It is noteworthy that although researchers found overall differences in arousal to rape stimuli for rapists as compared to nonrapists, it has also been observed in these studies that "many normals do respond considerably to deviant film material involving rape" (Hinton et al., 1980). These experiments have not, however, identified variables that distinguish among individuals from the general population who do or do not become sexually aroused by rape depictions.

Perceptions of Rape

There are many clinical reports that rapists believe in rape myths and tend to have caloused perceptions of their victims' reactions to being raped (e.g., Clark & Lewis, 1977; Gager & Schurr, 1976). For example, Gager and Schurr (1976) stated that probably the single most used cry of rapist to victim is "You know you want it. You *all* want it" and afterward, "There now, you really enjoyed it, didn't you?" Consistent with these observations are the results of more systematic studies (e.g., Wolfe & Baker, 1980) demonstrating that rapists generally believe their actions did not in fact constitute rape (e.g., the woman was a willing participant or enjoyed the experience). It has also been shown that perceptions of forced-sex scenarios as well as perceptions of actual rape depictions are related to male college students' past reported acts of sexual aggression, including acts legally defined as rape and attempted rape (see Koss & Leonard, in press; Koss & Oros, 1982).

Self-Reported Likelihood of Raping

Men's self-reported likelihood of committing rape has been shown in a number of studies to be positively related to sexual

arousal to rape, rape perceptions, the acceptance of various rape myths, and laboratory-assessed aggression against a female confederate (see Malamuth, 1981, for a review). Recently, Check and Malamuth (Note 2) found that male hostility toward women, as well as past reported incidents of overt sexual aggression, is related to self-reported likelihood of both raping and forcing women into unwanted sex acts. These findings thus provide some support for the construct validity of likelihood-of-raping reports as a measure of inclinations to aggress against women.

In summary, there is some evidence for the validity of measures of sexual arousal to rape, perceptions of rape, and self-reported likelihood of raping as indirect measures of sexually aggressive tendencies. All three measures were included in the present investigation, a procedure that had the advantage of allowing the assessment of the consistency of their relation to the sex-role-relevant situational variable of stranger versus acquaintance rape and to individual differences in sex role stereotyping. In terms of situational differences, it was argued above that sex role socialization processes are particularly likely to function in the context of acquaintance or date rape. Therefore, because most individuals reared in North American culture reflect that culture's sex role patterns, we expected that there would be a general difference in reactions to depictions of stranger versus acquaintance rape. Specifically, subjects responding to an acquaintance-rape depiction were expected to show greater sexual arousal to this type of rape (relative to arousal to consenting sex), perceive more favorable reactions on the part of the victim, and (for men) report a greater likelihood of raping than subjects responding to a stranger-rape depiction.

In terms of individual differences, to the extent that sex roles are rape supportive, it may be argued that individuals with more stereotyped sex role beliefs have more rape-supportive inclinations than individuals with less stereotyped sex role beliefs. Further, it was argued above that sexual arousal to rape, perceptions of rape, and reported likelihood of raping are indirect measures of such inclinations. Therefore, we expected that high sex role stereotyping individuals would show

greater sexual arousal to rape, perceive a rape victim as reacting more favorably to the assault, and (for men) report a greater likelihood of raping than low sex role stereotyping subjects. Most importantly, however, we expected an interaction such that sex role stereotyping would have no influence on responses to consenting sex (the control condition) but rather would only mediate reactions to rape, especially acquaintance rape (again, because acquaintance rape is most relevant to the sex role socialization analysis of rape).

With respect to gender differences, our previous research (Malamuth & Check, 1981) found that men are generally more accepting of rape myths and violence against women than are women, in terms of summed scores on Burt's (1980) multi-item global measures of these variables. However, studies investigating reactions to descriptions of specific rape incidents have not shown consistent results. Some studies have found gender differences (e.g., Calhoun, Selby, & Warring, 1976), whereas other studies have found no gender differences (e.g., Calhoun, Cann, Selby, & Magee, 1981) or (more commonly) differences on some variables but not on others (e.g., Malamuth & Check, 1980b; Malamuth, Haber, & Feshbach, 1980; Malamuth, Heim, & Feshbach, 1980; Selby, Calhoun, & Brock, 1977). The one finding that does appear to emerge relatively consistently, however, is that men in general report more sexual arousal to short, written rape and consenting-intercourse depictions than do women (e.g., Malamuth & Check, 1980b; Malamuth, Haber, & Feshbach, 1980). Nonetheless, in light of these inconsistent findings, no explicit hypotheses were formulated regarding gender differences in reactions to the sexual depictions used in the present investigation. With respect to sex role stereotyping, Burt (1980) found that both men's and women's sex role stereotyping inclinations were predictive of rape-supportive attitudes and beliefs. Therefore, in the present investigation the predictions noted earlier regarding the influence of sex role stereotyping were made for men and women alike. That is, the sex role stereotyping variable was not expected to interact with gender in influencing reactions to the portrayals:

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 289 male and female introductory psychology students from the University of Manitoba who received experimental credit in their course for participating in the experiment. They were randomly assigned to the story conditions.

Overview of Design

The experiment was conducted in two phases. In the attitude-assessment phase, subjects filled out questionnaires assessing sex role stereotyping as well as a number of attitudes and beliefs regarding sexuality and violence (Burt, 1980). In the actual experimental phase (about 3 weeks later), subjects were presented with one of three sexually explicit depictions and asked to indicate their sexual arousal, their perceptions of the stories, and (for men) their own likelihood of behaving as the man in the story did. Subjects were unaware of the connection between the two phases of the research. The independent variables included story depiction (consenting intercourse vs. stranger rape vs. acquaintance rape). As well, sex role stereotyping (low sex role stereotyping vs. high sex role stereotyping, based on a median split) and subject gender were employed as "individual differences" variables. The design was thus a 2 (sex role stereotyping) \times 3 (story) \times 2 (gender) fully crossed factorial. The major dependent variables were sexual arousal, perceptions of the reactions of the woman in the story, and (for men) self-reported likelihood of raping.

Materials

Sex Role Stereotyping and attitude scales. The scale used to assess sex role stereotyping was Burt's (1980) nine-item Sex Role Stereotyping scale (e.g., "There is something wrong with a woman who doesn't want to marry and raise a family"). Burt (1980) reported an alpha reliability of .80 for this scale, and Check and Malamuth (Note 2) found this measure to correlate $-.73$ (in the expected direction) with Spence and Helmreich's (1972) measure of sex role stereotyping.

To determine the replicability of Burt's (1980) correlational findings, her scales measuring rape-myth acceptance (19 items), acceptance of interpersonal violence against women (6 items), and adversarial sex beliefs (9 items) were also administered. In addition, a scale previously used by Malamuth and Check (Note 3) to measure general acceptance of violence (10 items) was included. Whereas five of the six items on Burt's (1980) Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence scale related specifically to violence against women, all 10 items on the Malamuth and Check (Note 3) scale related to violence of a more general nature (e.g., "It is never necessary to fight to defend your honor"). The items on these attitude scales were generally scored on 9-point scales, ranging from -4 (strongly disagree) to $+4$ (strongly agree). Subjects were also asked in this attitude-assessment phase to indicate their gender and date of birth. As well, subjects' introductory psychology instructor was noted, but they were not asked for their names.

Stories. Each of three versions of the typewritten stories used in the experimental phase of the research was virtually identical in length (about 1,000 words). The stories depicted sexual acts resulting in intercourse between a man and a woman, told from the perspective of the man. In the stranger-rape condition, a stranger secretly followed a woman home from a disco, forced his way into her apartment, and forcibly raped her despite her frightened cries and protests.

In the acquaintance-rape condition, the couple went to the man's apartment after a (first) date at a local disco. The woman was portrayed as sexually experienced, the couple had been drinking, and the woman had told the man earlier that she believed in free love. The man was very sexually aroused and when he kissed her, she responded to his kiss. When he tried to remove her shirt, however, she objected, but he pulled it off despite her protests. A struggle ensued until the man finally removed all of the woman's clothing. The woman was now screaming and the man slapped her to quiet her screams and subdue her. He then raped her.

The mutually consenting condition served as the control condition and was identical (word for word) to the acquaintance-rape depiction up until the point at which the man began removing the woman's shirt. At this point the woman did not protest and the couple proceeded to have mutually consenting intercourse.

A number of important points should be noted about these stories. First, in all three depictions, the woman was wearing the same ("enticing") clothing and care was taken to ensure that the number of sexual cues (references to breasts, genitalia, etc.) as well as descriptions of the man's sexual arousal were identical. This was done to avoid confounding the manipulation of acquaintance-rape cues and sexual explicitness. Second, both rape stories were identical in terms of the number of references to the woman's pain (e.g., "she cries out in pain"). The rape depictions were also similar with respect to the man's overt sexual and aggressive actions during the actual rape (e.g., "You are getting on top of her . . . You give her a hard slap and tell her to be quiet . . . She's screaming, trying to push you off her but you force her back down and cover her mouth). Finally, in neither rape story was there any indication that the woman was at all willing or derived any sexual pleasure from the assault.²

Sexual arousal. Sexual arousal was measured on a 0% to 100% scale in units of 10%. Because this was a major dependent measure, consideration of the validity of self-reported sexual arousal is warranted. For non-deviant populations, self-reported sexual arousal has been found generally to correlate highly with genital measures (Abel et al., 1977; Abel, Blanchard, Murphy, Becker, & Djenderedjian, 1981; Heiman, 1977; Schaefer, Tregerthan, & Colgan, 1976), with the magnitude of correlations typically ranging from .40 to .70. Previous studies comparing responses to rape versus nonrape stimuli (e.g., Abel et al., 1977; Malamuth & Check, 1980a) have found similar high correspondence between self-reports and genital measures. It is now recognized that physiological measures, as well as, of course, self-reports, may be voluntarily altered by subjects sufficiently motivated to do so (Amoroso & Brown, 1973; Cerny, 1978; Henson & Rubin, 1971; Laws & Holmen, 1978; Quinsey & Carrigan, 1978). Discrepancies between self-reports and gen-

ital measures, however, are far more likely to be in the direction of underestimating rather than overestimating arousal via self-reports (Abel et al., 1977; Schaefer et al., 1976).

Because the present study focused on the sexual responses of nondeviants, it was important to obtain a relatively representative sample of subjects. It was therefore decided to use only self-reported measures of sexual arousal in light of a number of studies indicating important differences in sexual attitudes, personality indexes, and sexual behavior between students who volunteer for a study involving genital measures and nonvolunteers for such a study (Farkas, Sine, & Evans, 1978; Sine, 1977; Vogelmann-Sine, Sine, Farkas, & Evans, in press). In contrast, research has generally not shown such differences between volunteers and nonvolunteers for sex research using questionnaires (Barker & Perlman, 1975; Perlman, in press). As well, the use of self-reported sexual arousal allowed the present study to be carried out within intact classes wherein virtually all subjects participated, thus reducing the possibility of volunteer bias.

Perceptions of the stories. Perceptions of the woman's willingness were rated from 1 (completely unwilling) to 10 (completely willing). Perceptions of the woman's pleasure and pain were each rated from 1 (no pleasure/pain) to 9 (extremely high pleasure/pain). Three additional 5-point scales were included to assess perceptions of (a) the quality of the writing, (b) the realism, and (c) the sexual explicitness of the stories. These items were included to guard against the possibility that certain versions of the story (e.g., stranger rape) would appear less realistic and subsequently inhibit sexual arousal. A demographic form was also included at this point, but again, subjects were not asked to give their names.

Self-reported likelihood of raping. After indicating their perceptions of the woman in the story, male subjects were asked how likely they would be to behave as the man in the story did if they could be assured that no one would know. They were asked to indicate their responses on a scale from 1 (not at all likely) to 5 (very likely). For the men who received a rape story, this item constituted the measure of their self-reported likelihood of committing the rape that was depicted in the story (i.e., stranger rape vs. acquaintance rape).

Procedure

Subjects signed up for the attitude-assessment phase (described as a study of attitudes toward men and women) without knowing that they would later be asked to participate in the experimental phase. They completed the Sex Role Stereotyping and attitude scales in large

² The data to be presented here are from two separate replications of the same experiment. An analysis including replication as an independent variable yielded no differences as a function of replication nor any interactions with the story variable on any of the dependent measures. This clearly justified collapsing across replications.

groups of from 10 to 30 individuals, outside of class time. The experimental phase of the research (about 3 weeks later) was conducted by a second experimenter during class time. Although no postexperimental questionnaire was employed to assess awareness, it seems reasonable to assume that subjects were unaware of the connection between the experimental and the attitude-assessment phases. In several previous studies employing similar types of multiphase procedures that are followed by a postexperimental questionnaire, no subject has ever indicated any awareness of any connection between different phases of the research (Check & Malamuth, in press-a, in press-b; Malamuth & Check, 1981, in press; Check, Note 4; Malamuth, Reisin, & Spinner, Note 5).

The experimental phase was described as an evaluation of pornography involving exposure to sexually explicit materials. At the beginning of the session, it was indicated that the stories contained explicit pornography that some might find offensive and that responses were completely anonymous. Further, it was repeatedly emphasized that anyone was free to leave at any time without any penalty whatsoever. No subject left the room. Subjects were also told that they should feel under no obligation to examine or fill out the materials. Three subjects decided not to fill out the materials.

Each subject was given a story to read with an attached questionnaire. Also attached was a sealed envelope containing a written debriefing. Subjects were asked to read the debriefing after the story. The debriefing thanked the subject for his or her participation and described the nature of the research. The debriefing given to subjects who read rape depictions stressed the violent nature of rape, emphasized that the stories were complete fantasy, presented several points designed to dispel a number of rape myths, and briefly discussed the possible antisocial effects of exposure to sexually explicit violent pornography. In a number of studies examining the effectiveness of these types of debriefings, it has been found that subjects who were exposed to rape portrayals and then given a debriefing were less inclined to accept certain rape myths than control subjects (Check & Malamuth, in press-b; Donnerstein & Berkowitz, 1981; Malamuth & Check, in press; Check, Note 4).

On the basis of the demographic and other data collected during both phases of the research (i.e., date of birth, gender, and introductory psychology instructor), the sex role stereotyping and attitude data from subjects who had signed up for the attitude-assessment phase were matched with the experimental data from the stories that were distributed in class. Of the 284 subjects who were in class when the stories were distributed, 184 had also signed up for the attitude-assessment phase and were subsequently matched with their data from the stories.

Results

To examine the possibility of sampling bias, a preliminary analysis was conducted comparing the 184 matched subjects who had signed up for the attitude-assessment phase against the remaining subjects (those who had not participated in the earlier

phase). This analysis yielded no differences on any of the dependent measures as a function of participation in the earlier phase, nor were there any interactions with either the story variable or the sex role stereotyping variable, thus suggesting no sampling biases.

Manipulation Checks

The items assessing perceptions of the quality of writing, realism, and sexual explicitness of the stories were analyzed with a 3 (story) \times 2 (sex role stereotyping) \times 2 (gender) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). As expected, this analysis yielded no differences across the three stories or any interactions involving the story variable. Overall, the mean ratings for the stories (on 5-point scales) were 2.74 for quality of writing, 3.27 for realism, and 3.89 for sexual explicitness.

Sexual Arousal and Perceptions of the Woman's Reactions

To simplify analysis, the three items assessing perceptions of the woman's reactions (willingness, pleasure, and pain) were factor analyzed using a principal-factor solution. Only one factor with eigenvalue greater than 1.0 (accounting for 78% of the variance) emerged, with all three items loading highly. The factor loadings were +.90 for woman's willingness, +.93 for woman's pleasure, and -.63 for woman's pain. This factor clearly reflected the degree to which the woman's reactions were perceived as favorable or unfavorable. Factor scores were then calculated to yield a single (standardized) Perceptions factor score for each subject.

To test the main experimental hypotheses, the sexual arousal data and Perceptions factor scores were analyzed as a set with a 2 (sex role stereotyping) \times 3 (story) \times 2 (gender) MANOVA. (Self-reported likelihood of raping was analyzed separately, because this measure applied only to men in the rape story conditions.) This analysis yielded a main effect of gender, $F(2, 171) = 10.55, p < .0001$, with a univariate effect only on sexual arousal, $F(1, 172) = 18.96, p < .0001$. Men reported higher arousal than women ($M = 42.9\%$ and

27.9%, respectively), consistent with the results of Malamuth and Check (1980b) and Malamuth, Haber, and Feshbach (1980). There were no other effects or interactions involving gender.

As expected, there was also a multivariate interaction of sex role stereotyping and story, with univariate effects on both sexual arousal and Perceptions (see Table 1, row 1). In general, this interaction effect occurred because the sex role stereotyping variable influenced reactions to the rape depictions but did not influence reactions to the consenting-intercourse depiction. To address more specifically the relevant experimental hypotheses, simple-interaction-effects tests and simple-main-effects tests were then conducted on these data. Because two rape stories were employed, two simple interaction effects were tested: (a) the simple interaction of sex role stereotyping and the comparison of consenting sex versus stranger rape and (b) the simple interaction of sex role stereotyping and the comparison of consenting sex versus acquaintance rape. Consistent with expectations, the latter effect was statistically significant (Table 1, row 2), whereas the former effect tended only to approach significance (Table 1, row 3). These interaction tests were then followed up by simple-main-effects tests

and comparisons, the results of which are discussed below.

Simple main effects of story depiction. It can be seen from rows 1 and 2 of Table 2 that low sex role stereotyping individuals showed inhibited levels of sexual arousal to rape (relative to arousal to consenting sex), whereas high sex role stereotyping subjects showed arousal patterns similar to those of identified rapists (i.e., about equal levels of arousal to both rape and consenting depictions). In fact, high sex role stereotyping subjects reported nonsignificantly higher arousal to the acquaintance-rape than to the consenting-sex depiction.

An additional comparison computed for the arousal data was between the conditions equivalent to those used by Abel et al. (1977). This was done to examine the similarity of the present data with those of earlier investigations (that did not divide nonrapists on the basis of their sex role stereotyping). A comparison of the difference between overall arousal to the consenting-sex depiction ($M = 38.1\%$) versus arousal to the stranger-rape depiction ($M = 30.6\%$), collapsed across the sex role stereotyping dimension, was, as expected, found to be statistically significant, $t(172) = 1.73, p < .05$, one-tailed. The overall mean level of arousal to the acquaintance-

Table 1
Interactive Effects of Sex Role Stereotyping (SRS) and Story Content on Sexual Arousal and Perceptions

Effect	Multivariate effects		Univariate effects			
			Sexual arousal		Perceptions	
	F	p <	F	p <	F	p <
Overall SRS × Story	3.02	.018	3.89	.023	3.83	.024
Simple interaction						
SRS × Consent vs. Acquaintance	5.85	.004	7.76	.006	7.09	.009
SRS × Consent vs. Stranger	2.64	.075	2.49	.117	4.14	.044
Simple Main SRS						
SRS at acquaintance rape	5.92	.004	7.29	.008	7.73	.007
SRS at stranger rape	2.53	.083	2.41	.123	3.95	.049
SRS at consenting sex	.69	.504	.68	.411	1.06	.306

Note. For the overall SRS × Story interaction effect, multivariate $df = 4$ and 342, univariate $df = 2$ and 172. For all other effects, multivariate $df = 2$ and 171, univariate $df = 1$ and 172.

signed to read. With this procedure it was possible to determine whether sexual arousal to each rape story was associated with reported likelihood of committing that particular rape. To this end, correlations were computed separately between sexual arousal to each of the rape stories and reported likelihood of committing that act. This analysis revealed a significant correlation between arousal and reported likelihood of committing the acquaintance rape, $r(40) = .42, p < .003$, but there was no relation between arousal and reported likelihood of committing the stranger rape, $r(37) = .03, ns$.³

Attitudinal Correlates of Sex Role Stereotyping

It was also of interest in this study to examine the replicability of Burt's (1980) findings that people's sex role stereotyping beliefs are predictive of attitudes and beliefs regarding sexuality and violence. To this end, subjects' Sex Role Stereotyping scale scores were correlated with scores from each of the other scales administered in the attitude-assessment phase of the research. These analyses revealed that sex role stereotyping was positively correlated (all $ps < .001$) with rape-myth acceptance ($r = .54$), acceptance of violence against women ($r = .39$), general acceptance of violence ($r = .32$), and adversarial sex beliefs ($r = .46$). Moreover, these correlations were similar for men and women, as was the case with Burt's (1980) data.⁴ These results thus replicate Burt's findings and, in keeping with the findings of cross-cultural research (e.g., McConahay & McConahay, 1977), suggest that sex role stereotyping is associated with acceptance of violence in general as well as acceptance of violence specifically against women.

Discussion

Consistent with hypotheses derived from the sex role socialization analysis of rape, the present findings demonstrated the importance of considering both situational context and individual difference variables in studying people's reactions to rape. These results will be discussed separately for each of the

three dependent measures: sexual arousal, perceptions, and reported likelihood of raping.

Sexual Arousal

In terms of sexual arousal, two findings emerged. The most important finding was that sex role stereotyping mediated arousal to rape (especially acquaintance rape) but as predicted did not influence arousal to the consenting-intercourse depiction. High sex role stereotyping individuals showed high levels of arousal to rape (especially acquaintance rape), and in fact, the sexual arousal patterns of these individuals were indistinguishable from those of Abel et al.'s (1977) rapists (i.e., equal levels of arousal to both rape and consenting depictions). In contrast, low sex role stereotyping individuals showed lower levels of arousal to rape, with arousal patterns more akin to those of Abel et al.'s nonrapist sample. Thus, it seems that, at least in terms of sexual arousal, there is some validity to the contention of sex role theorists (e.g., Clark & Lewis, 1977; Diamond, 1980) that there are many "normal" individuals in society who have response characteristics that are similar to those of identified rapists.⁵

³ To take advantage of greater statistical power, these correlations were computed using the data of all subjects who participated in the experimental phase of the research. Using only those subjects who had also earlier signed up for the attitude-assessment phase, $r(27) = .36$ for the acquaintance-rape condition and $r(26) = .08$ for the stranger-rape condition.

⁴ A preliminary analysis of these data as a function of gender revealed that, as found by Malamuth and Check (1981), men were more accepting of rape myths and violence against women and had more adversarial sex beliefs than women (all $ps < .01$). As well, men were more accepting of violence in general than were women ($p < .001$), but men and women did not differ in terms of sex role stereotyping ($t < 1$).

⁵ Of course, we are not suggesting that both men and women with more stereotyped sex role beliefs have greater sexually aggressive inclinations than those with less stereotyped sex role beliefs. Although such stereotyping may indeed reflect sexually aggressive tendencies in men, this is unlikely to be the case for women. Nonetheless, it may well be that such stereotyping in women reflects tendencies that can indirectly contribute to sexually aggressive acts. For example, a woman high in sex role stereotyping may be more likely to "blame" herself or another woman for being sexually assaulted (especially

We also found that on the whole, subjects showed lower levels of arousal to stranger rape relative to arousal to an equally sexually explicit consenting-intercourse depiction. In contrast, subjects generally showed equal levels of arousal to both the acquaintance-rape and consenting-sex depictions. A recent laboratory experiment by Malamuth, Check, and Briere (Note 6) demonstrated that males show higher penile tumescence to acquaintance rape than to stranger rape, thus lending further support to the present findings. As well, these data are consistent with previous findings that nonrapists do in fact become aroused to certain types of rape depictions (e.g., depictions in which the victim is portrayed as becoming sexually stimulated by the assault; Malamuth & Check, 1980a, 1980b, 1983) and thus further illustrate the mediating influence of depiction content on the generalizability of Abel et al.'s (1977) conclusions that nonrapists show inhibited levels of arousal to rape depictions.

Perceptions of the Rape Victim's Reactions

The present data also revealed that both high and low sex role stereotyping individuals perceived the acquaintance-rape victim as reacting more favorably to the assault than the stranger-rape victim, despite the fact that there were no indications of a favorable reaction from the victim in either of these two rape depictions. Further, subjects with more stereotyped sex role beliefs perceived to a greater degree that the rape victim reacted favorably, especially in the acquaintance-rape condition. This finding provides further support for the sex role analysis of rape, which suggests that the acquaintance-rape situation

by an acquaintance), and consequently less likely to report the offender, than a woman low in sex role stereotyping. Similarly, Klemmack and Klemmack (1976) found that women with more traditional (stereotyped) sex role beliefs were less likely to define a number of situations as rape than women with more liberal (less stereotyped) sex role beliefs. Because the situations used by Klemmack and Klemmack were all constructed so as to fit the legal definition of rape, these authors argued that female jurors with more traditional sex role beliefs may also be less likely to convict a guilty rapist in a rape trial.

may lead to ambiguities that can bias perceptions and may result in greater hesitancy about defining the situation as rape. These biased perceptions would also account for the previously mentioned findings that many people do not consider acquaintance rape to be real rape (Klemmack & Klemmack, 1976; Zellman et al., Note 1). As well, the lack of sex differences in the present investigation suggests that men and women share these perceptual biases.

Men's Self-Reported Likelihood of Raping

We expected that males would report a greater likelihood of committing acquaintance rape than stranger rape. Although the means were in the expected direction, this difference did not reach statistical significance. In a recent laboratory study, however, Check and Malamuth (Note 7) found that acquaintance rape was seen as a significantly more likely occurrence than stranger rape, both in terms of men's self-reported likelihood that they would commit rape and in terms of women's predictions about the likelihood that men in general would commit such crimes.

An important finding emerging from the likelihood-of-raping data was that men with more stereotyped sex role beliefs were more likely to indicate that they might commit rape. Thus, not only did these men show sexual arousal and perceptual patterns that are similar to those of identified rapists but they also saw themselves as having more of a potential to rape. In the context of the previously noted research showing that likelihood-of-raping ratings are predictive of aggressive responses both in the laboratory and in naturalistic settings, the present data suggest that sex role stereotyping may affect sexually aggressive behavior.

It was also found that men's self-reported likelihood of behaving as the acquaintance rapist was correlated with how aroused they became while reading this depiction, whereas a similar relation was not found in the stranger-rape condition. These data may be interpreted in the context of the earlier noted findings that acquaintance rape is less likely to be perceived as real rape. In other words,

acquaintance rape may be seen by many individuals as within the realm of normative acts. Therefore, when a subject in the present experiment realized that he was sexually stimulated by the acquaintance depiction, he may, in keeping with the self-perception attributional analysis (Bem, 1972), have perceived that there is some likelihood that he would engage in an act of this nature. However, a subject who realized that he became sexually aroused by the stranger-rape depiction may have had the accompanying cognition that such an act is clearly deviant and socially unacceptable. For him, therefore, the perception of his own arousal may not result in the belief that there is any likelihood that he would commit such an act. This analysis suggests that there may be differences in the reasons why subjects indicate some likelihood that they would commit acquaintance as compared to stranger rape. In the former case, perceptions of sexual gratification may underlie likelihood-of-raping reports, whereas in the latter case such motives as hostility toward women may be more important. Future research should further examine whether men who indicate some likelihood of committing acquaintance rape may be distinguished from those indicating a likelihood of committing stranger rape.

Finally, an important finding in this investigation was that no sex differences emerged with respect to the influence of sex role stereotyping on reactions to rape nor (as was the case with Burt's, 1980, findings) with respect to the relation between sex role stereotyping and the measures of rape-myth acceptance, acceptance of interpersonal violence, and beliefs in adversarial sex relations. Thus, it does seem that as Weis and Borges (1973) have argued, traditional sex roles socialize both men and women—men to be offenders and women to be victims:

The stereotypic notions of male and female roles and their relationship to conceptions of masculine and feminine sexuality, coupled with a situation that is fraught with ambiguous expectations, provide the ingredients for systematically socialized actors who can participate in the drama of rape. (p. 86)

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