

Attitudes Towards Different Types of Rape

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Abstract : Rape by an acquaintance is a prevalent type of sexual assault that is often misperceived and downplayed. To date, there has been no empirical investigation of the prevailing social attitudes towards this type of rape as compared to stranger rape. The present study seeks to address this issue by evaluating widely held attitudes towards these different types of rape. The mediating role of gender and rape myths acceptance is assessed as well. Three hundred and twenty participants, equally divided by gender, completed self-report questionnaires. The results indicate that sexual coercion by strangers is perceived as rape to a significantly greater degree than forced sex by an acquaintance, which in turn is believed to be more harmful than coercion within a steady relationship, particularly by men who view rape in accordance with prevailing rape-supportive attitudes. The same pattern of differentiation emerged in the participants' attitudes toward the psychological harm expected following each, as well as the advisability of reporting the incidents to the police. Implications for preventive efforts are discussed.

Keywords : rape supportive attitudes, acquaintance rape, sexual assault, gender differences

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