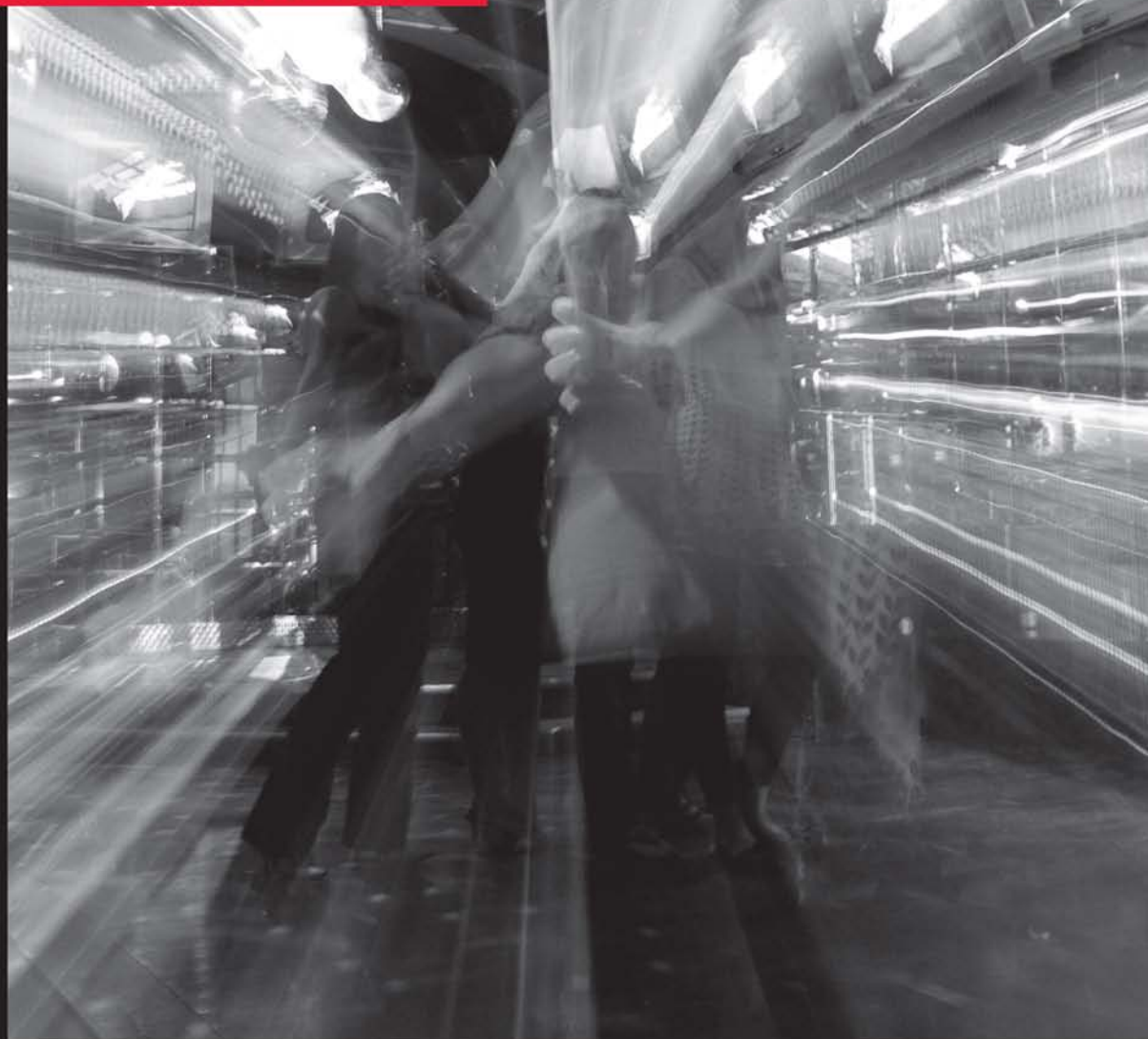




ROUTLEDGE  
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# The Routledge Handbook of Deviant Behavior

Edited by Clifton D. Bryant

# The Routledge Handbook of Deviant Behavior

*The Routledge Handbook of Deviant Behavior* presents a comprehensive, integrative, and accessible overview of the contemporary body of knowledge in the field of social deviance in the 21st century.

This book addresses the full range of scholarly concerns within this area—including theoretical, methodological, and substantive issues—in over 70 original chapters, written by an international mix of recognized scholars. Each of these essays not only provides insight into the historical and sociological evolution of the topic addressed, but highlights associated notable thinkers, research findings, and key published works for further reference. As a whole, this *Handbook* undertakes an in-depth evaluation of the contemporary state of knowledge within the area of social deviance, and beyond this considers future directions and concerns that will engage scholars in the decades ahead.

The inclusion of comparative and cross-cultural examples and discussions, relevant case studies and other pedagogical features makes this book an invaluable learning tool for undergraduate and postgraduate students in such disciplines as criminology, mental health studies, criminal theory, and contemporary sociology.

**Clifton D. Bryant** was Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Virginia Tech, US. He was the editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopedia of Criminology and Deviant Behavior* (Routledge, 2001), editor of the *Handbook of Death & Dying* (Sage, 2003), co-editor of *21st Century Sociology: A Reference Handbook* (Sage, 2007), and co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of Death and the Human Experience* (Sage, 2009). Other publications include *Deviant Behavior: Readings in the Sociology of Norm Violations* (Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1990), *Sexual Deviancy and Social Proscription: The Social Context of Carnal Behavior* (Human Sciences Press, 1982), and *Khaki-Collar Crime: Deviant Behaviour in the Military Context* (The Free Press, 1979). He was also the founding editor of the journal *Deviant Behavior*.

# The Routledge Handbook of Deviant Behavior

*Edited by Clifton D. Bryant*

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# Rape and sexual assault

*Lynn Pazzani*

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When one thinks of a rape or sexual assault,<sup>1</sup> the image of a masked stranger with a weapon accosting a young woman walking alone in the dark tends to come to mind. Such scenarios are clearly deviant acts. They are frowned upon by society as a whole and are punished by our criminal justice system. But this clearly deviant act of rape is not, in actuality, the typical manner in which such assaults occur. A more common scenario is that of a boyfriend or acquaintance using pressure, threats, and/or intoxicants to coerce a woman or girl into engaging in sexual activity when she does not truly want to. These types of assaults, though extremely common, tend not to be viewed as deviant in our culture, and they are not punished by our criminal justice system to the same extent that deviant sexual assaults are.

This chapter will discuss both deviant rape and the more common forms of rape. For simplicity, it will focus on assaults where a female is the victim and a male is the offender. Of course, assaults with all possible combinations of victim and offender gender do occur, but such assaults are so different from male on female assault that it would be irresponsible to include them in this short entry as though they had the same causes and effects. Similarly, sexual assaults committed against young children will not be discussed because of their differences from sexual assaults involving adolescents and adults.

## **Rape defined**

The definition of rape in colonial America was “carnal knowledge of a woman, not one’s wife, by force and against her will,” which only included penile-vaginal penetration. This excluded many other types of sexual assault, as well as rapes or sexual assaults committed by a spouse. The “essential elements of a traditional rape were (1) force, (2) absence of consent, and (3) vaginal penetration” (Spohn and Horney 1992: 22). In California, force is no longer required in a number of circumstances, including if the victim is in some way incapacitated from resisting or is not mentally capable of consenting. Absence of consent was originally demonstrated by the victim physically “resisting to the utmost,” so if the woman did not fight for the entire duration of the attack it was assumed that she had consented (Samaha 2005). Absence of consent now can be indicated by verbal statements, or is not required if the victim is impaired or a minor. Moreover, rape and sexual assault now also include any type of sexual act, including oral copulation and

penetration with a foreign object. Penetration can be extremely brief or incomplete, and there need not be thrusting after penetration for the act to be considered criminal.

## **Deviant rape**

Holmes and Holmes (2002) summarize four types of rapists and the acts they commit, all of which fall outside of the norms of acceptable sexual behavior. For the most part, these rapists commit assaults that involve a stranger; they are not the sort of thing one could imagine occurring on a date or at a party. This typology was originally considered to cover all sexual assaults; however, in the second edition of their book, Holmes and Holmes (2002) caution that it should really only be applied to stranger rapes.

### *The power reassurance rapist*

The power reassurance rapist, also known as the compensatory rapist, believes himself to be a loser and uses rape as a way to elevate his status. He is characterized as single, passive, having a low education level, and possibly coming from a home with a domineering or seductive mother. This type of rapist may engage in such behaviors as voyeurism or exhibitionism. Although it is generally believed that rape is not about sex, but rather an assault in which sex increases the impact, for the power reassurance rapist the assault *is* about sex. He is the least violent of the four types of rapist and uses only enough force to gain control over the victim. The sex makes him feel in control and important; something he does not feel during his daily life. He tends to believe that his victim enjoyed the rape, will often be concerned about her well-being, and will not harm her unnecessarily (Holmes and Holmes 2002).

### *The anger retaliation rapist*

The anger retaliation rapist feels he has suffered great injustices at the hands of the women in his life and commits rape in order to hurt the victim and get back at all women. This type of rapist tends to have grown up in an unstable household, has hostile feelings about women in general, and perceives himself to be very masculine. He often has an action-based job and/or participates in contact sports. He is likely to be married and may have extra-marital sexual relationships with multiple partners as a means of supporting his highly masculine status.

He commits assaults in response to precipitating events involving a woman in his life. When he becomes angry, he may attack suddenly and with little planning. Such assaults are not specifically sexually motivated, but rather are aggressive acts that involve sex. This type of rapist intends to harm his victim and will use any weapons that are available, as well as directing profanity towards his victim. He associates sexual gratification with anger and rage, and will often force the victim to engage in particularly degrading acts (Holmes and Holmes 2002).

### *The power assertive rapist*

The power assertive rapist has a strong belief in his own superiority simply because he is a man. He believes men are superior to women and that they are entitled to rape women as a matter of course. This type of rapist tends to have grown up in an unstable home and most will have suffered some form of physical abuse growing up. He will be concerned about his image, and his manner of dress and the vehicle he drives indicate his position in society and allow him to show off.

The power assertive rapist will often find his victims in bars. The rapes will involve verbal and physical assault and he will frequently commit multiple assaults against the victim during the attack. The rape is not specifically about sex; rather, it is an act of predation. His level of aggression may increase as he commits more assaults over time (Holmes and Holmes 2002).

### *The sadistic rapist*

Like the power assertive rapist, the sadistic rapist tends to have grown up in an unstable or single-parent household. He also is likely to have suffered physical abuse. However, unlike the power assertive rapist, sadistic rapists often grow up in households where sexual deviance also occurs. The sadistic rapist will often be married, live in a middle-class neighborhood, have a high level of education and a white-collar job, and be viewed as a pillar of the community. He plans his assaults carefully and is skillful at evading detection by the police.

The sadistic rapist uses rape as a means of expressing his aggressive sexual fantasies and intends to inflict physical and psychological pain on his victims. This type of rapist often brings his victim to a secondary location which he controls and uses restraining items such as gags and handcuffs, not so much to control the victim as to increase her fear. He may also describe in detail to the victim what he intends to do to her to terrorize her before he commits the assault. This type of rapist is most likely to kill his victims (Holmes and Holmes 2002).

### **“Real rape”**

Susan Estrich (1987) states that “real rape” is defined by actions involving strangers, violence, weapons, resistance, injury, and immediate notification of the police. She notes that women who are victims of a sexual assault that does not meet the “real rape” criteria often do not even identify the incident as a sexual assault themselves. Stories about rape that make the news tend to be in line with the “real rape” stereotype, and those that are not often include rape myths (Dowler 2006). When women are taught to protect themselves from rape, they learn about not going out alone at night, locking their doors, carrying pepper spray, and many other techniques designed to prevent someone from accosting them by surprise (Ullman 2007). These techniques are aimed at preventing the types of assault that would be committed by Holmes and Holmes’ four types of rapist.

Unfortunately, this focus may be misplaced. Only approximately 15% of sexual assaults are estimated to be committed by strangers (Pazzani 2007). The rest are what Estrich (1987) says society considers “simple rape,” although they are anything but simple when one examines all the factors associated with defining, identifying, and prosecuting these assaults.

### **Non-deviant rape**

Much more common than the stereotypical “real rape” is a type of sexual assault that more closely mirrors socially acceptable sexual behavior. This is commonly referred to as “acquaintance rape,” although it includes sexual assault committed by anyone known to the victim—family members, boyfriends, coworkers, friends, people the victim has just met, as well as acquaintances. Scholars have recently begun to differentiate between stranger and acquaintance rape (Pazzani 2007). However, there are significant differences in causes and effects within the acquaintance rape category depending on the relationship between the victim and the offender that have not yet been seriously studied.

In determining the nature and extent of sexual assault, victimization surveys tend to be preferred over police data because of the very low rate of reporting sexual assault to the authorities. In addition to an overall low rate of reporting, victims who do report their assault are more likely to have been assaulted by strangers, to have had a weapon used against them, and to need medical attention when compared to all rape victims identified in victimization surveys (Koss 1985).

Tjaden and Thoennes (2006) use the National Violence Against Women Survey to give us a picture of the types of sexual assault that are occurring and to whom. Of women over the age of 18, 14.8% report that they have been the victim of a completed sexual assault at some point in their lives. Rates are slightly higher for African American women and lower for Hispanic women. Victims tend to be young at the time of their first rape. Only 16.6% report that their first sexual assault occurred when they were 25 or older; 21.6% were under 12; 32.4% were between 12 and 17; and 29.4% were between 18 and 24. Results from this survey also indicate that, of women who identify themselves as rape victims, only 16.6% had ever been assaulted by a stranger. The rest had only been assaulted by people known to them: 20.2% were assaulted by a spouse or an ex-spouse; 4.3% by a cohabiting partner or ex-partner; 21.5% by a date or former date; 22.4% by a relative other than a spouse; and 27.3% by an acquaintance.<sup>2</sup> Most sexual assaults occur in a private setting (84.5%). Only 37.8% of assaults involved overt acts of physical violence, other than the sexual assault, and only 10.8% involved a weapon. Only 19.1% of these assaults were reported to the police<sup>3</sup> (Feild 1978; Gray 2006; Peterson and Muehlenhard 2004). This picture of sexual assault is significantly different from that suggested by the stereotypes relating to rape.

## A rape culture

In a supposedly civilized society, why are so many women and girls being assaulted by people close to them? Many scholars theorize that we have a rape-supportive culture, making this type of behavior acceptable rather than deviant. We also live in a society where, although significant improvement has been made over the last 40 years, women are not entirely equal to men. According to feminist theory, patriarchy lies at the root of women's oppression (Donovan 1992). Rape is simply a way in which men oppress women by valuing their own right to sexual access above a woman's right to decide with whom she has sex.

Rape myths—false or stereotypical beliefs about rape and rape victims (Burt 1980)—play a large part in the rape culture. They indicate that women have multiple motivations for fabricating a charge of rape and that, should a rape occur, the woman likely did something to cause it. Assuming the charge is not made up, rape myths indicate that women want to engage in sexual activity even if it seems like they are resisting, and they serve to downplay or discard perceptions of harm to the victim of a sexual assault (Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1995). This impacts both potential perpetrators of sexual assault and those who respond to women claiming to have been victimized.

If women truly do want sex but are supposed to resist initially to seem like a “good woman,” saying “no” would indeed sometimes mean “yes.” Saying “no” could easily be seen as the type of “token resistance” females are expected to give in order to preserve their reputation or “make it interesting,” even when they really do want sex (Warshaw and Parrot 1991). If women truly do always want sex, using a bit of force may almost be considered doing the woman a favor. She is supposed to resist, but a heroic man overpowers her in order to give her pleasure. If women always want sex, then having sex with a woman who is intoxicated or even unconscious would not really be wrong because, if she could have consented, she would have. All of these

acts are unmistakably criminal. However, in attitudinal surveys, people repeatedly give responses that are more consistent with rape myths than with the law (Feild 1978; Gray 2006; Peterson and Muehlenhard 2004). These perspectives can make potential perpetrators think that their actions are acceptable and make those responding to a claim of assault more judgmental and less sympathetic toward the victim.

The relationship between the victim and the offender is a major factor in determining whether the rape myth culture is relied upon in the response to a claim of rape. Women who are victims of a rape and sexual assault committed by a stranger tend to be believed and receive less blame about the assault than do women who were assaulted by someone they know, as numerous studies from different time periods have shown (Abrams *et al.* 2003; Bridges 1991; L'Armand and Pepitone 1982). Because acquaintance rape involves the behavior of the woman to a much greater degree than does stranger rape, it is easy for others to assume that the woman's behavior contributing to the rape is the same as the woman being to blame for it (Calhoun and Townsley 1991). Assaults committed by strangers are also considered to be more serious than assaults committed by acquaintances, probably because the assumed degree of harm to the female is reduced if there is a chance, or even an expectation, that she would consent to sex with her attacker (L'Armand and Pepitone 1982). Assaults committed by people close to the victim that do not include physical violence are generally not considered to be serious (Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Monson 1998).

Another factor in determining how a sexual encounter and a victim are perceived is the use of intoxicants. When a woman is impaired for any reason, including her voluntary use of drugs or alcohol, she is not able to give legal consent to engage in sexual activity. Although this person may not resist, or may even indicate that she wants to have sex, engaging in sexual activity with her is legally considered a rape/sexual assault. Yet research participants believe that if a woman is sexually assaulted, she is more likely to be responsible for the attack if she is intoxicated than if she is sober (Richardson and Campbell 1982). It is the woman's job to prevent sexual access (Warshaw and Parrot 1991) and she should have known better than to allow herself to become intoxicated and vulnerable to assault. Although a woman is considered more responsible when she is intoxicated, if a man is intoxicated, he is considered *less* responsible for committing an assault (Richardson and Campbell 1982). Men are supposed to be seeking sex constantly and they may become forceful when intoxicated, but they are not blamed for their actions because "it was the intoxicant that made them do it." The fact that the impact of intoxicant use on perceptions of responsibility is opposite for males and females is evidence of a culture that expects people to act within a narrow set of gender norms and becomes upset when those norms are broken.

## Conclusion

Sexual assault is associated with a host of negative outcomes, including mental and physical health problems for the victim (Monroe *et al.* 2005) and significant others in the victim's life. With nearly one in six women reporting being victimized at some point in their lives, obviously a large number of people are affected. The focus on stranger rape and deviant sexual behavior may be misplaced, as these assaults are far less common than assaults that are culturally supported. In the United States, despite the legal sanctions against them, rapes and sexual assaults that include actions consistent with the social norms for sexual behavior are not as likely to be prosecuted (Bouffard 2000; Spohn *et al.* 2001). Changes to both the legal system and cultural views about rape are needed in order to improve the situation for victims and society in general.



## Notes

- 1 The reader should note that, in this chapter, the terms “rape” and “sexual assault” will be used interchangeably. These terms are defined differently in legal systems throughout the United States, depending on the type of bodily contact, the relationship between victim and offender, age, and many other factors. The two terms refer here to any sexual contact to the mouth, anus or vagina, using a penis, finger or hand, or any foreign object, that occurs against an individual’s will. This tends to encompass all the various legal statutes and definitions involving sexual contact, although they may have different legal terms associated with them, depending on the state in which they occur.
- 2 The percentages add up to more than 100 because some victims had been assaulted by more than one person, often from different relationship categories.
- 3 This could be an overestimation, given that those who did report could be more likely to disclose their assault to survey researchers than those who did not.

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