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**University of Alberta**

**Unwanted Sex:  
Criminal Acts or Normative Experiences**

**A Comparison of Students' Attitudes  
and Their Ability to Identify Experiences as Sexual Assault**

by

Susan J. Hutton



A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial  
fulfilment for the requirement of the degree of **MASTER OF ARTS**

**Department of Sociology**

**Edmonton, Alberta**

**Fall 1995**



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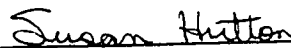
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Experiences as Sexual Assault

**Degree:** Master of Arts

**Year this Degree Granted:** 1995

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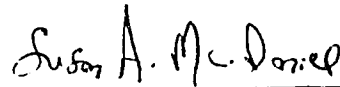
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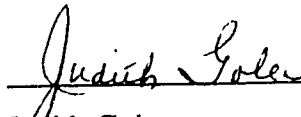
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled, UNWANTED SEX: CRIMINAL ACTS OR NORMATIVE EXPERIENCES. A COMPARISON OF STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND THEIR ABILITY TO IDENTIFY EXPERIENCES AS SEXUAL ASSAULT submitted by SUSAN J. HUTTON in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.



Susan A. McDaniel (Supervisor)



Judith Golec



Brenda Munro

September 25, 1995

## **DEDICATION**

To Ken,  
for sharing this adventure . . .  
and all those to come.

## **ABSTRACT**

Experiences with coercive unwanted sex often remain hidden because structural and situational factors prevent students from identifying, labelling, and subsequently reporting such experiences as criminal acts. This study examines University of Alberta students' attitudes about and experiences with sexual assault. It is argued that students who reject the stereotypical image, as measured by attitudes, would define a broader range of sexually coercive experiences as sexual assault. In general, students rejected sexual assault myths, and thus, the stereotypical image of sexual assault. Females rejected the myths more strongly than males, and female victims rejected the myths more strongly than other students. A quantitative analysis of females victims, and the reconstruction of individual vignettes from aggregate data revealed that despite victimized females' broader definitions of sexual assault, many were unable to identify their own coercive experiences as sexual assault. The results of the analysis revealed the structural and situational factors which conceal coercive experience as normative acts.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As in any project of this size, I could not have done this alone. So many people have had a hand in shaping this final product, I hope I can remember them all. For those not mentioned, forgive me, you know who you are and how you helped.

My partner, Ken, spent many hours discussing this project, sharing my successes and my setbacks, and always encouraging me to continue. Thank you for being there as only you know how.

My thesis committee spent hours helping me create this thesis. To Dr. Susan McDaniel, for giving this thesis direction, for encouraging me to go further than I thought I could. Both I and my thesis have grown immensely as a result of your support. To Dr. Judith Golec, for all the hours you spent with me from the beginning of this project, way back when, to now. For helping me to create the vignettes and for providing the structure for analysis. To Dr. Brenda Munro, for all the time you spent with me shaping the quantitative analysis of this thesis, and for asking the hard questions. Thank you to all of you, for your support, guidance, and enthusiasm for my work.

Various funding agencies made this work possible. The Students' Union, the Office of the Dean of Student Services, and the Vice-President Research, provided the funding for the original study. The Province of Alberta provided a scholarship, which allowed me time to focus on this thesis.

Many people at the University of Alberta helped me along the way. Thank you to the faculty, staff, and students, for helping to shape this project: by allowing me to use my courses to find answers to my questions, for providing insight into the creation of the study and this thesis, and for asking thought-provoking questions along the way. Thank you to those who provided technical support, and those who helped in the data collection original study. Thank you, also to the instructors who gave up class time for the administration of the questionnaire. You'll know who you are.

Thank you to those anonymous students who offered their time and showed courage in providing this important information.

Finally, but not least importantly, thank you to all of my close friends and family, for your support and encouragement during this process. I could not have done it without you.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PARADOX OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

#### INTRODUCTION

Sexual assault in Canada is a serious problem that is at once both straightforward and complicated because it is condemned and condoned by Canadians. If asked what they thought of sexual assault, most Canadians would probably comment on the horrendous nature of the crime, and they would agree that sexual assault *is* a crime. But if asked to define sexual assault, many would probably offer the stereotypical image of what Burt (1991) calls "real" sexual assault, a violent, late-night, attack by a male stranger, who physically forces a woman to have sexual intercourse. However, this form of sexual assault constitutes only a small percentage of actual Canadian sexual assaults (Dekeseredy et al., 1993; Statistics Canada, 1993; Dekeseredy & Hinch, 1991). Unfortunately, the most common forms of sexual assault, and other forms of sexual coercion, remain hidden from public view because they are regarded as normal sexual behaviour. Thus, while Canadians condemn sexual assault as a crime, they are affected by the "social and legal bias toward defining only rather extreme instances of forced intercourse" as sexual assault (Skelton & Burkhart, 1980: 235). Paradoxically, while Canadians condemn sexual assault, they also condone many forms of sexual assault and sexual coercion as normative.

"People have in their heads an idea of a "real" rape . . . . When they hear of a specific incident in which a woman says she was raped, they look at the incident, compare it to their idea of "real" rape, and all too often, decide that the woman was not "really" raped (Burt, 1991: 27).

The discrepancy between perceived and actual reality exists because structural and situational factors obscure many forms of sexual victimization.



## **STRUCTURAL FACTORS**

### **Patriarchal Influence**

Historically, women in Canada have lacked sexual autonomy (Dubinsky, 1993; Chapman, 1984). Dubinsky suggests that one of the fundamental mechanisms of patriarchy is men's control over women's sexuality. Young women's sexuality was the property of their fathers, and when they married this ownership was transferred to the husband. Women were divided into two groups. "Good" women were pure and chaste, lived within the rigid sexual boundaries proscribed by Canadian culture, and were expected to remain virgins until after marriage. "Bad" women were those who chose to engage in sexual behaviour outside these restrictive boundaries. Women whose purity was in question were of less value in the marriage market. So rigid was the control over Canadian women's sexuality that women who were caught engaging in *consensual* sexual behaviour outside of marriage were believed to have been seduced (Dubinsky, 1993; Chapman, 1984). In many of these cases, the women's fathers could legally charge the woman's sex partner with seduction, requiring financial compensation for destroying the woman's reputation, or requiring the woman's partner to marry her. "In the patriarchal and rigidly moralistic world of turn-of-the-century Ontario, yes could only safely mean yes in tightly proscribed situations, typically marriage. Otherwise, women's own desires could get them into trouble" (Dubinsky, 1993: 49).

Because men have traditionally held the power to define women's sexuality, women's perceptions about and experiences with sexual assault have been ignored (Dubinsky, 1993; MacKinnon, 1987; Chapman, 1984). In Canada, the legal definition of sexual assault often reflected the rigid constraints of women's sexuality. Because of the strict control of women's sexuality, Canadian women were more afraid of the shame and community disapproval they would face after an assault than they were of being physically assaulted (Dubinsky, 1993). This rigid control meant that "bad" girls would not be believed if they reported an assault, and "good" girls would avoid reporting assaults

because of their fear of public humiliation. In order to prove that they had been truly assaulted, the legal system required women to prove that they were of a pure and chaste character before the assault, that they violently resisted the assault, sometimes to the point of death, and they often required corroboration of the assault from another person to prove that an assault actually occurred (Dubinsky, 1993; Chapman, 1984). Clearly, the early legal system was biased in favour of men, and reflected the rigid control over women's sexuality. "If rape and sexual assault are broadly defined, then more incidents may be termed rape or sexual assault. If they are narrowly defined, fewer acts may be counted" (DeKeseredy & Hinch, 1991: 94). "Narrower definitions of rape have served the interests of men. In contrast, broader definitions would be more inclusive of the interests of women" (Muehlenhard et al., 1992: 25). As feminists became involved in challenging the traditional and stereotypical male bias, reports of sexual assault increased.

"Between 1962 and 1982 the number of rape charges laid in Canada almost tripled from three per 100,000 to ten. Between 1982 and 1988, the rates almost doubled again. In 1988, per 100,000 persons, there were 91 sexual assaults, 4 sexual assaults with a weapon and 1 aggravated sexual assault reported in Canada" (Duffy, 1995: 164).

Despite the fact that reported cases of sexual assault have increased over the years, "even these drastically increased figures probably underplay the dimensions of sexual violence against women" in Canada (Duffy, 1995: 164).

In order to label an experience as coercive or criminal it must first be identified as such (Laws & Schwartz, 1977). Despite the changes in reported rates of sexual assault, many people continue to rely on the stereotypical image to determine if their own experiences meet the criteria of labelling an experience as sexual assault. When women's experiences with sexual victimization do not match the narrow societal definition of criminal acts, many women are unable to identify their experiences as crimes. This mismatch between experience and the societal definition of sexual assault reveals the "systematic societal denial and invalidation of women's experiences as victims of sexual assault . . . . Women's experiences tend to be denied in order to fit into male-produced

modes of knowledge about what 'really' occurs in incidents of sexual assault" (Hutchinson & McDaniel, 1986: 18). The denial of women's victimization becomes internalized by individual members of society and "women become complicit in their own victimization and blinded to its structural components" (McDaniel & van Roosmalen, 1991: 4). This creates a vicious cycle of denial. Very few of women's experiences meet the narrow definition of sexual assault, and as such, their real experiences are hidden and denied by society. Women internalize this denial, and are unable to define their experiences as criminal acts. In turn, they do not report the experience to authorities because they will not be believed, or the case will not be prosecuted because of lack of evidence that an assault has actually occurred. In turn, society will believe that sexual assault is not a problem in society. Women's experiences with all but the most overt forms of sexual violence remain hidden from society. The consequences of this systematic denial operate to subordinate women's position in society.

It is in the patriarchy's best interest to promote "real" rape by strange men. These images keep women frightened and act as a form of social control, keeping women off the streets and out of male territory, and thus limiting women's freedom. They also promote the idea that women need to attach themselves to one man who will protect them from others (even though women are more likely to be raped by dates and husbands than by strangers - Koss et al., 1988). They promote the idea that women need to do whatever it takes to maintain relationships with their male protectors. If women become less wary of stranger rape and more wary of acquaintance rape, this would decrease the social control of women as well as men's access to reluctant women (Muehlenhard et al., 1992: 41).

The structural components of sexual assault and rape are embedded in the culture of society. "Sexual assault occurs in a sociocultural context that affects the victim's, perpetrator's, and society's understanding of, reaction to, and tolerance for the event" (White & Sorenson, 1992: 191). Some of the culturally embedded factors that affect the image of sexual assault include the language of sexual assault, differential gender socialization, the sexual double standard, sexual scripts and myths about sexual assault. These factors mitigate attempts to label sexually coercive experiences as sexual assault.

## **The Language of Sexual Assault**

The language of sexual victimization is important in understanding how experiences are identified and labelled. While the stereotypical image of "real" rape or sexual assault provides only a narrow definition of what constitutes sexual assault or rape, sexual victimization encompasses a broad continuum of behaviours, ranging from sexual harassment to violent forced sexual intercourse, and even murder. Language is important in understanding sexual coercion because "naming is power and naming certain sexual situations as sexually coercive will have an impact on how those situations are experienced and evaluated" (Muehlenhard et al., 1992: 41). Unfortunately, the stereotypical image of sexual assault or rape is often the ruler that many people use to interpret their own experiences as crimes. This image excludes many victims' experiences. Because women's experiences often do not match this extreme stereotypical image, they are unable to identify their experiences as crimes. Because the image portrays men as the aggressor and women as the victim, male victims of sexual coercion are also prevented from identifying their experiences as crimes. Because only the extreme forms of sexual victimization of women are legitimated as "real," many victims are unable to identify their own experiences as crimes.

The terms sexual assault and rape are often used interchangeably in the literature. However, in 1983, the term rape was removed from the criminal code and replaced with the three levels of sexual assault (Montreal Health Press, 1994; Dekeseredy & Hinch, 1991). The Montreal Health Press (1994:20) offers an easy to understand definition of the three types of sexual assault:

- (a) Simple sexual assault includes any attack of a sexual nature in which some force is used, such as forced kissing, bum pinching and forced intercourse. No sign of physical injury or abuse is necessary,
- (b) Sexual assault with a weapon can include more than one assailant and/or the offender uses, carries or threatens to use a weapon (imitation or real); threatens to inflict bodily harm on a third person (a child or another person present); injures the complainant,

(c) Aggravated sexual assault includes cases in which the victim is wounded, maimed, disfigured, brutally beaten or in danger of losing her life during the assault.

This legal definition encompasses many more sexually coercive experiences than previously covered by the law. Dekeseredy & Hinch argue, however, that the term rape should be reintroduced into the criminal code because:

Rape remains an integral part of everyday language. To assume that it will have lost its meaning just because the law no longer recognizes it as an offence label, assumes a more powerful role for law than can be justifiably assumed. Rather than abandon use of rape entirely, it makes more sense to recognize that it is perceived to be a serious offence, by victims, offenders and the general public, and to expand the definition in the manner suggested (Dekeseredy & Hinch, 1991: 90).

Dekeseredy & Hinch (1991) define rape and sexual assault as follows: "Rape refers to unconsented acts of penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth for the purposes of committing a sexual act . . . . Sexual assault is defined as any unconsented sexual touching" (94). These definitions are both broad and inclusive. They are also gender neutral since no gender is exclusively assigned to the role of victim or aggressor. This thesis uses these broad definitions.

The issue of consent is also important in understanding the definition of sexual assault and rape. According to the Criminal Code of Canada (Roberts & Mohr, 1994), a person is deemed unable to consent to sex if:

- (a) consent is given by someone other than the victim
- (b) the victim is incapable of consenting, such as cases of intoxication
- (c) if the aggressor abuses a position of trust, power or authority
- (d) the victim expresses, in words or conduct, a lack of consent
- (e) the victim changes his/her mind after consent is given.

Given these broad and inclusive definition of sexual assault and rape, with the additional information about consent, it would appear that almost all forms of unwanted sex would be labelled as criminal acts. Unfortunately, this is not often the case because all of these experiences occur within the cultural context of a society that retains the stereotypical image of sexual assault. Structural factors render many forms of sexual victimization invisible by legitimizing coercive sexual behaviour. One of the ways in which this is done involves differential gender socialization.

### **Differential Socialization**

It is no secret that women and men in North America are different from each other. Males are seen as strong, aggressive, instrumental leaders, women are seen as passive, emotional and nurturing. This difference between the sexes is partially based on the mistaken assumption that women and men are *biologically* different (Valverde, 1985). Proponents of the biological argument suggest that gender differences are innate, and, therefore, immutable (Rossi, 1984: 15). Female and male differences are assumed to be natural and normal. However, "what appears to be natural may be framed in the politics of power" (Worell & Etaugh, 1994: 447). Feminists have argued that masculine and feminine characteristics are socially constructed to reflect the patriarchal bias in society. "Sexuality does not reside in the hormones of men and women; it is constructed socially and historically" (Dubinsky, 1993: 4). The feminine qualities ascribed to women are not only different from men's masculine qualities, but are also seen as less important. That which is feminine is devalued, that which is masculine is regarded as normative (Alcoff, 1988). Male-defined femininity is infused with confusing and often negative images, while masculine qualities are highly valued. This construction of gender translates into differential status for women and men. Differential socialization creates an unequal playing field when it comes to sexual interactions.

Early in life men are taught to be tough and aggressive, to take control, to compete and to have power, and how not to be feminine (Bechoffer & Parrot, 1991; McDaniel, 1987). Women are taught how to care for others, how to be passive and nonaggressive, how to put others first and how to need approval (Bechoffer & Parrot, 1991; Aizenman & Kelly, 1988). In addition to this socialization, women's lack of "real" power in society, social, economic, and political equality, minimizes women's sexual freedom. Compulsive heterosexuality, fear of stranger assault, economic dependence on men, and male privilege to women's sexuality create a system which subordinates women's sexuality to men's (Muehlenhard & Schrag, 1991; Valverde, 1985). "For women, sexuality is built around the twin poles of pleasure and danger, autonomy and victimization" (Dubinsky, 1993: 4). The social purity movement in Canada at the beginning of the twentieth century helped to create the images of women as sexually vulnerable victims, and men as sexually uncontrolled aggressors (Dubinsky, 1993), images which seem to persist even today in the sexual double standard.

### **The Sexual Double Standard**

Combined with differential socialization is the sexual double standard, which applauds sexual men and discourages sexual women. In general, men and women engage in sex for different reasons. Men are more likely to engage in sex for pleasure, fun, or conquest, and women are more likely to require love, emotional attachment, and commitment before engaging in sex (Carroll et al., 1985; Leigh, 1989). Leigh (1989) found that men "attached more importance than did women to sexual pleasure, conquest, and the relief of sexual tension as reasons for sex, while women saw emotional closeness as more important than did men" (205). The sexual double standard contributes to this difference in motivation to engage in sex by encouraging men to pursue sex as a goal, and at the same time discouraging women from seeking sex outside of culturally sanctioned heterosexual relationships (Bechoffer & Parrot, 1991; Laws & Schwartz, 1977). "Women have been traditionally punished for being openly and freely sexual;

men are praised for it" (Beneke, 1993: 356). Women may be reluctant to participate in sexual activity because of negative social sanctions, and fear of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (Bechoffer & Parrot, 1991; Leigh, 1989).

The sexual double standard requires that men initiate sex, and sexual socialization causes men to believe that "they have unquenchable sexual appetites, that they have a right to sex (Warshaw & Parrot, 1991: 80). Men are encouraged to pressure women for sex, and are taught that this type of behaviour is acceptable and expected. On the other hand, women are charged with the responsibility of regulating the amount and type of sex that occurs in a sexual interaction (White & Humphrey, 1991; Lewin, 1985; Faison, 1977). Women have been taught that "good girls" don't have sex, and that women who have sex too easily are "loose." Combined with a lack of positive female sex role models, many women are often reluctant to admit that they want sex (Lewin, 1985). This sexual double standard creates much ambiguity around the communication of sexual desire between women and men.

### **Sex Scripts**

The sexual double standard makes women reluctant to express sexual interest, and allows men to believe that women's reluctance to have sex is token (Muehlenhard & McCoy, 1991). Men have been taught that women's resistance to sex is "merely token, done so that a woman can have sex without appearing promiscuous" (Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988: 70). Neither sex is taught how to be assertive and talk about what they want sexually (Bechoffer & Parrot, 1991). Instead, seduction scripts replace explicit verbal consent (Muehlenhard et al., 1992). Sexual scripts dictate how a sexual situation will unfold and often lack straightforward communication (Muehlenhard et al., 1992). In order to prove their masculinity, men must actively indicate their sexual interest in a woman. In order to preserve their reputations, woman must express a reluctance to engage in sex. The man is then required to pressure her to have sex, since her refusal is made only to avoid appearing "loose" or "easy."



The difficulty with sexual scripts is that "this type of thinking completely denies the woman any choice of rational thought, or any opportunity to be believed if and when she says 'no' to sex" (Bechoffer & Parrot, 1991: 21). Many males believe that "no" means "yes" in a sexual situation because they have been socialized to ignore women's resistance to sexual attention (White & Humphrey, 1991; Miller & Marshall, 1987; Sandberg et al., 1987; Berger et al., 1986). However, *most* women *do not* use token or "scripted" refusals. Women who *do* use scripted refusals are acting in a rational manner given the negative sanctions associated with sexual women (Muehlenhard & McCoy, 1991; Muehlenhard & Hollabaugh, 1988). The sexual double standard and sex scripts are problematic in that they perpetuate "restrictive gender roles for women and place the burden of being the aggressor on men" (Muehlenhard & Hollabaugh, 1988: 878). The amount of pressure a man uses to obtain sex can range from verbal pressure, to physical pressure. "Our stereotypic notions of male and female sexuality contribute to the confusion of the definition of rape. In the dating situation, a male can be forceful in his attempts for sex without being a rapist" (Faison, 1977: 260). Men's socialization allows them to perceive their behaviour as seduction rather than rape while women's socialization causes them to accept sexually aggressive behaviour as normative (Koss, 1992; Berger et al., 1986; Lott et al., 1982).

Sexual socialization, the sexual double standard and sex scripts work to create an unequal sexual playing field for women and men. Patriarchal influence and the narrow definition of "real" sexual assault creates a structure in which women's sexual victimization and men's sexual aggression are identified and labelled as normative experiences. These structural supports prevent women and men from labelling behaviour as coercive or criminal. In addition to structural factors, specific situational factors also mitigate efforts to label coercive experiences as crimes.

## **SITUATIONAL FACTORS**

Multiple factors are involved in identifying sexual victimization and aggression as criminal acts. The structural factors of patriarchal influence, narrow definitions about what constitutes sexual assault, differential socialization, the sexual double standard, and sex scripts affect efforts to label experiences as criminal rather than normative. Situational factors also affect one's ability to identify an experience as coercive, and many of these are entwined with the structural factors. Situational factors include the location of the assault, relationship between the victim and assailant, previous sexual involvement between the victim and assailant, the issue of consent, involvement of alcohol, the assailants' aggression and uses of various coercive strategies to obtain sex, the victim's resistance, post-incident sexual involvement, effect of the experience on the victim, the assignment of responsibility for the experience, and reporting behaviour. One or all of these situational factors may affect how an experience is interpreted. Surrounding these situational factors are a series of myths which are also affected by the structural factors previously discussed. "Rape myths are prejudicial, stereotypical, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims or rapists. Rape myths have the effect of denying that many instances involving coercive sex are actually rapes" (Burt, 1991: 26). Myths about sexual assault and rape centre around the stereotypical image of rape and/or sexual assault, myths blame the victims for their assaults and excuse the perpetrators (Burkhart & Stanton, 1988). The following is a discussion of these factors and some of the myths that are associated with them.

### **Location**

The stereotypical image of "real" sexual assault is that of an attack by a stranger, which occurs outside in an alley after dark. In reality most assaults occur with someone the victim knows, often on a date or with an acquaintance or romantic partner (Bechoffer & Parrot; Koss et al., 1988). These assaults are most likely to occur in the victim's home or aggressor's home or vehicle (Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987; Koss et al., 1987;

Miller & Marshall, 1987). Assaults that occur in the home of the victim or aggressor or in a building or a vehicle are less likely to be identified as sexual assault or rape (Bechoffer & Parrot, 1991). "The dating system can easily lead to rape. It places actors with highly socialized but differing expectations into socially approved but ambiguous situations in which there is maximum privacy" (Weis & Borges, 1973: 89). "A beginning-date rapist may date woman to isolate her with an intention to rape, realizing that such an action is less likely to be labelled as rape than if he sexually assaulted a stranger on the street (Shotland, 1992: 130). The places where sexual assault is most likely to occur are the ones least likely to be identified as an unsafe for victims.

"Males may attach sexual meaning to a female's being in a given place, a meaning that she does not intend (Goodchilds et al., 1988: 326). Men may interpret women's actions as an interest in sex, when in fact the woman may have no such interest. For example, if a woman goes to a man's house on a first date, he may believe that she is willing to engage in sex, while the woman may interpret the act to mean that she trusts the man and feels safe with him. As with other myths, location myths work to mitigate efforts to label the most common assaults as crimes.

### **Relationship Between Victim and Aggressor**

The stereotypical image of rape involves a violent physical attack by a *male stranger and a female victim*. There are several points to be made about the relationship between victim and aggressor. First, this myth implies that rape is a *rare* event. Second, it suggests that you can't be assaulted by someone you *know*. Third, it implies that the perpetrators are psychotic or deviant *individuals*. Fourth, it relies on the assumption that *only men can be aggressors and only women can be victims*.

### Rare Event

Most sexual assaults and rapes in Canada are not reported (Dekeseredy et al., 1993; Statistics Canada, 1993; Dekeseredy & Hinch, 1991). This underreporting contributes to the myth that sexual assault and rape rarely occur even though sexual assault, rape and other forms of sexual coercion are common occurrences in Canada (Dekeseredy et al., 1993; Statistics Canada, 1993), and the United States (Burkhart & Fromuth, 1991; Gruerholz & Koralewski, 1991; Koss et al., 1987). The cases that are reported often conform to the stereotypical image of rape. A reliance on Canadian police statistics alone would support the notion that most sexual assaults are by strangers (Dekeseredy & Hinch, 1991). In reality most sexual assaults occur between people who know each other (Dekeseredy et al., 1993; Statistics Canada, 1993; Bechoffer & Parrot, 1991; Dekeseredy & Hinch, 1991; Burkhart & Stanton, 1988; Koss et al., 1988). The mismatch between reality and myth contributes to underreporting and the belief that rape and sexual assault are rare occurrences. "The belief that victimization is minimal keeps people uninformed, invalidates women's perceptions of what is happening to them and reinforces victims' sense of isolation and guilt" (Leidig, 1992:150).

### The Stranger

The myth that sexual assault only occurs with strangers prevents victims from being prepared to protect themselves from someone they trust (Murnen et al., 1989; Koss et al., 1988; Berger et al., 1986; Skelton & Burkhart, 1980) especially when more subtle forms of coercion are used (Berger et al., 1986). "A woman is socialized to think that nice men do not rape (and because she only dates nice men, she doesn't believe that she will be raped)" (Warshaw & Parrot, 1991: 80). A victim who is forced or coerced to have sex by someone they know is less likely to define the experience as rape or sexual assault. "Relationship status is a very powerful component of the social definition of rape, with the degree of acquaintance being negatively correlated with an attribution of rape by the victim, offender and other citizens" (Burkhart & Stanton, 1988: 43-44). The

closer the relationship between victim and aggressor the less serious the experience is judged and the less likely is to be defined as rape. (Burkhart & Stanton, 1988). The myth that all perpetrators are deviant strangers and that rape rarely occurs prevents victims from interpreting their own coercive experiences as crimes when these experiences do not match the stereotypical image of stranger rape.

### The Deviant Individual

The myth that rapists are deviant *individuals* hides the fact that most assaults are perpetrated by "ordinary" men under "ordinary" circumstances (Burkhart & Fromuth, 1991; Gruerholz & Koralewski, 1991; Muehlenhard & Falcon, 1990; Koss et al., 1985). Approximately one-third of males report that they would commit sexual assault or rape if they were guaranteed anonymity and freedom from punishment (Briere & Malamuth, 1983; Check & Malamuth, 1983; Lott et al., 1982; Malamuth, 1981; Malamuth et al., 1980). Several studies have shown that ordinary college and university men have coerced or forced women to have sex (DeKeseredy et al., 1993; Garrett-Gooding & Senter, 1987; Koss et al., 1987; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987; Rappaport & Burkhart, 1984; Koss & Oros, 1982; Koss, 1981). Myths about perpetrators suggest that men who commit rape are psychotic, or are sexually frustrated individuals who cannot control themselves. These myths perpetuate the stereotypical image of a perpetrator, which obscured the reality of most assaults.

In addition, the myth which focuses on the rapist as a deviant *individual* shifts the focus away from the culturally embedded factors that normalize sexual aggression (Leidig, 1992). If men are judged as individually deviant the structures that enable men to be aggressive remain hidden (Harris, 1990-91).

## Male Aggressors and Female Victims

The stereotype of "real" sexual assault or rape perpetuates the myth that only men are perpetrators and only women are victims. In keeping with the stereotypical image of sexual assault most research has focused on female victims and male aggressors (Johnson & Sacco, 1995; Dekeseredy et al., 1993; Koss et al., 1987; Amik & Calhoun, 1987; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987; Berger et al., 1986; Levine-MacCombie & Koss, 1986; Kanin, 1985; Rappaport & Burkhart, 1984; Herold et al., 1979; Kanin & Parcell, 1977; Levine & Kanin, 1987; Kanin, 1967; Kanin, 1957; Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957). In studies where this gender difference has not been assumed, evidence has been found of male victims and female aggressors (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994; Aizenman & Kelly, 1988; Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988; Muehlenhard & Long, 1988; Struckman-Johnson, 1988; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1988; Sandberg et al., 1987; Lott et al., 1982; Schultz & DeSavage, 1975).

Gender-neutral approaches to studying sexual assault have the advantage of not conforming to traditional gender stereotypes. Including men as victims challenges myths of masculinity, such as myths that men are invulnerable, always in control, and always ready to have sex . . . . A study that asks questions restricted to female victims and male perpetrators obviously will find information only about female victims and male perpetrators . . . . However, an analysis that is gender-neutral has the disadvantage of ignoring the many implications of gender as it is constructed by our culture. Studies that investigate the prevalence of unwanted sexual activity among both women and men, without investigating the different meanings and consequences that such experiences have for women and men, could be misinterpreted to mean that women's and men's experiences are similar (Muehlenhard et al., 1992: 137).

*Female victims* have received more research attention than *male victims*, a difference attributed to the belief that "while individual men may be victimized by sexual aggression, men as a group are not" (Wilson & Faison, 1979: 323). Studies show that male victims' experiences with female aggressors are different from female victims'

experiences with male aggressors (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994; O'Sullivan & Byers, 1993; Lottes, 1992; Poppen & Segal, 1988; Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988; Sandberg et al., 1987; Wilson & Faison, 1979). This point will be discussed further in the section concerning types coercive strategies.

The myth that only females are victims and that men can't be sexually assaulted can jeopardize male victims since they may be less able to identify potentially dangerous situations (King, 1992). These myths also prevent men who are sexually assaulted or raped from defining their experiences as such, and fear of not being believed prevents them from reporting such assaults (King, 1992). Approximately five to ten percent of all reported rapes are from male victims, and men often only report their attacks when they have been physically harmed and require medical attention (Warshaw, 1993; Foreman, 1982). Regardless of the gender of the victim the perpetrator of forced sex is almost always male (Warshaw, 1993; Leidig, 1992; Koss, 1992).

### **Sexual Involvement Between Victim and Aggressor**

The stereotypical image of sexual assault involves a stranger. The offshoot of this image is that the victim and aggressor have never before met and have certainly not engaged in previous sexual behaviour. When a woman is sexually assaulted by someone she knows, and with whom she has had sex, she is less likely to believe that the experience is an assault. This myth suggests that once a woman allows a man to have sex with her, she has an obligation to allow him continual sexual access. Prior level of sexual involvement may cause some women to feel obligated by social pressure to continue to have sex in what is called "the power of sexual precedence" (Shotland & Hunter, 1995: 235). In assessing date-rape scenarios in which relationship was the manipulated variable, Sheldon-Keiler et al. (1995) found that males held the expectation that "the aggressive male has more of a 'right' to have sex . . . and the victim has less of a right to say no when there is a love or incipient love relationship" (317). Another

myth associated with sexual involvement suggests that if a woman engages in necking and petting, it then becomes her fault if the man forces her to have sexual intercourse. "The logic is that a woman's earlier actions . . . negate the legitimacy of any subsequent refusal to have further sex. Her resistance, seen as either token or inappropriate, must be overcome. Forced sex is justified and ceases to be labelled a crime" (White and Humphrey, 1991: 52).

Another myth suggests that a certain level of force is acceptable in order to persuade a woman to have sex for the first time. The sexual double standard and sex scripts prevent women's resistance to sex from being regarded as genuine. Instead, men are encouraged to pressure a woman to have sex. While most people would define forced sex as sexual assault, there is a reluctance to label such experiences as crimes when they occur between two people who know each other (White & Humphrey, 1991; Jenkins & Dambrot, 1987). "Many young men continue to believe forced sex is acceptable in certain situations; young women reluctantly accept forced sex as part of the dating game" (Hall et al., 1986: 115). Studies show that the use of force to obtain sex while on a date is acceptable to many young people (Aizenman & Kelly, 1988; Goodchilds et al., 1988; Koss et al., 1988; Muehlenhard et al., 1985). This type of sex is labelled as many things, such as a mistake or a miscommunication, but is rarely perceived or labelled as a crime. Forced sex is not seen as sexual assault but as an expected part of male-female relations (White & Humphrey, 1991; Aizenman & Kelly, 1988; Goodchilds, et al., 1988; Koss, 1988; Muehlenhard et al., 1985; Berger et al, 1986).

These myths disproportionately place the burden of sexual responsibility on women while releasing men from responsibility for coercive behaviour. Regardless of whether the experience occurs between a couple who has long been involved in a sexual relationship, or between two people who have never before had sex, these myths about sexual involvement favour men's position over women's.



## **Consent**

As previously mentioned there are certain circumstances under which a woman is incapable of providing consent:

- (a) consent is given by someone other than the victim
- (b) the victim is incapable of consenting, such as cases of intoxication
- (c) if the aggressor abuses a position of trust, power or authority
- (d) the victim expresses, in words or conduct, a lack of consent
- (e) the victim changes his/her mind after consent is given.

While this would appear to be a fairly straightforward definition, structural factors such as sexual scripts and the sexual double standard, obscure the ability to determine if consent has been given.

Most assaults occur with men known to the victims under circumstances "where consensual sex is a possibility" and this makes it more difficult to determine if consent has been given (Bechoffer & Parrot, 1991: 10). "The closer the prerape situation is to a context in which sex is a possibility (e.g., a party, a date, consensual necking or petting), the more difficult it is to convince the world that a rape occurred" (Burt, 1991: 31). "The problem of determining whether a 'real' rape has occurred then becomes perceiving that voluntary action ended and coercion began" (Burt, 1991: 27). There are three issues to consider regarding consent. First, it is often difficult to determine if initial consent to sex is provided. Second, it is also difficult to determine when consent is withdrawn in a sexual situation. Third, some women are seen to consent more readily than others, making consent for some women almost meaningless.

### Initial Consent

First, it is difficult to determine if initial consent was ever provided in many sexual circumstances. Structural factors surround many sexual interactions in ambiguity. "Couples, regardless of their levels of intimacy, are often reluctant to communicate clearly their expectations and desires. Additionally, individual partners may believe that they are sending and receiving veridical interpersonal cues when, in fact, misperceptions may be more the norm" (Burkhart & Stanton, 1988: 60). Research shows that men are more likely than women to view a situation as sexual and to interpret women's actions as sexual invitations (Anderson & Aymami, 1993; Shea, 1993; Bechoffer & Parrot, 1991; White & Humphrey, 1991; Goodchilds, et al., 1988; Shotland & Craig, 1988; Abbey, 1982). Women's resistance to sex is often regarded as merely token, so that "no" becomes interpreted to mean many things but "no." Miscommunication around sex often occurs in favour of the aggressor because consent is almost impossible to prove.

### Withdrawn Consent

It is also virtually impossible to determine if consent is withdrawn during a sexual experience. "If sexual preliminaries have begun, (women) often feel responsible for the man's arousal and question their right to withdraw consent" (Berger et al., 1986: 21). Once consent to sex is given, continuous consent is implied. Even if a woman indicates that she does not want to continue sex, men may regard this as token resistance. Again, withdrawn consent is almost impossible to prove.

## Meaningless Consent

"To differentiate a rape from "just sex," one must be convinced that the victim did not consent to the sexual acts performed . . . women with certain reputations or identities . . . are stereotypically assumed to consent more readily, to more men, in more situations. (Burt, 1991: 30).

Women who stray from the normative boundaries of societal expectations and who report sexual assault are often not taken seriously by society. Women who are unattractive, sexually active, prostitutes, and women of ethnic origin are often judged as less important to society, and as such, their claims of assault are often dismissed by authorities (Burt, 1991).

Victims are also judged as giving consent based on their actions rather than on what they say (Burt, 1991). For example, dressing provocatively, or going to a man's house on a first date implies consent. Women who have drunken sex at a party are seen as fair game for anyone who wants to have sex with them (Burt, 1991; Harrison et al., 1991). Victims may be judged as giving consent based on their previous "reputation." Women who have sex too readily or who initiate sex implies a willingness to have sex with anyone (Bowland, 1994; Burt, 1991).

Consent is a necessary factor in determining if a sexual assault has occurred. Unfortunately, the myths surrounding the victim's actions and behaviours make women's consent an almost meaningless concept. The structural and situational factors associated with sexual assault mitigate the effectiveness of using consent to determine if a sexual assault has occurred.

## **Alcohol**

The involvement of alcohol in a sexual assault often prevents the participants from identifying it as a crime because "differential meanings are ascribed to men and women who drink" (Harney & Muehlenhard, 1991: 167). Alcohol reduces the perceived responsibility of the perpetrator and increases the perceived responsibility of the victim for the assault (Richardson & Hammock, 1991). Alcohol also reduces people's ability to recognize dangerous situations, it reduces inhibitions and has been used to excuse perpetrators from their sexually coercive behaviour (Bechoffer & Parrot, 1991). If a woman is sexually assaulted or raped while drinking one myth suggests that she is responsible for the assault by making herself vulnerable (Burt, 1991). This myth removes responsibility for the assault from the aggressor. However, alcohol may impair women's ability to physically resist an assault (Warshaw, 1993).

Koss (1988) found a difference in victims' and aggressors' reports about the use of alcohol in unwanted sexual experiences. Both victims and aggressors suggested that approximately 75% of aggressors used alcohol in the assaults but aggressors rated alcohol use by victims as higher (75%) than the victims themselves reported using (55%). A coercive man may interpret a woman's intoxication as a desire for sex (Koss & Dinero, 1989). Some coercive men use intoxication to subdue a victim, while others simply take advantage of a person who is too intoxicated to resist. One myth surrounding the use of alcohol suggests that if a woman has drunken sex at a party she is fair game for anyone who wants to have sex with her (Burt, 1991). Legally, anyone who has sex with a person who is too intoxicated to consent has committed a sexual assault. However, if a victim is sexually coerced while intoxicated she or he will be reluctant to report the incident to authorities for fear of being blamed for the assault (Koss, 1988). The involvement of intoxicants mitigates efforts to label such experiences as crimes, and places the responsibility for the assaults disproportionately on the victims.

## **Types of Coercive and Sexual Behaviour**

The stereotypical image of "real" rape or sexual assault is of a man who physically forces or threatens a woman to have sexual intercourse. However, the continuum of sexual victimization encompasses a much broader range of coercive and sexual behaviours. Relations between women and men exist on a continuum that ranges from consensual to coercive to aggressive (Muehlenhard et al., 1992). Some coercive and aggressive experiences are more easily identified as sexual assault, and while others may not meet the legal definition of sexual assault, they still qualify as sexually coercive behaviours. The following discussion looks at the two categories of coercion, those more easily identified as sexual assault based on the legal definition of sexual assault used in this thesis, and those less easily identified as such, and at the sexual behaviours that occur during these experiences. It is important to note that many victims of assault experience multiple forms of coercion.

### **Coercion More Easily Identified as Sexual Assault**

This category includes coercive behaviours such as physical force, threats, a position of authority to coerce sex, and/or intoxication to obtain sex from an unwilling partner. Sexual coercion involving multiple offenders is also regarded as sexual assault. According to the legal definition of sexual assault and consent provided previously in this thesis, experiences involving these types of coercive strategies or experiences should be defined as sexual assault.

### *Physical Force or Threats*

Any experience in which an aggressor uses physical force or threats to obtain sex from an unwilling partner constitutes sexual assault. However, many cases are not labelled as such because the coerced sex occurs between people who know each other (White & Humphrey, 1991; Jenkins & Dambrot, 1987). Often the use of force to get a reluctant woman to have sex is seen as a "justifiable rape" (Warshaw, 1993). The previously discussed structural and situational factors mitigate attempts to label such experiences as crimes. Instead, these forms of coercive sex are accepted as a normative part of the dating experience. One thing is clear, "the degree of force used was the most powerful determinant of an assault being defined as rape and of reporting the event to others" (Skelton & Burkhart, 1980: 229). It appears that people continue to rely on the presence of force to define an experience as sexual assault, and as such, only the most coercive experiences would be accepted as "real" sexual assault. However, as previously discussed, even some forced sex experiences are not defined as sexual assault. When force is used, it may be justified by aggressors who "believe that women like to be treated violently and that force is sexually stimulating to women. This line of reasoning ultimately comes down to: 'There's no such thing as rape'" (Burt, 1991: 31). "Men may not label an attempt to obtain intercourse as a forceful action, although women, who are generally smaller in size and less strong than men, may experience the attempt as a forceful one" (Cook, 1995: 191).

One of the arguments used to deflect attention away from men's aggressive behaviour is to suggest that women can also be aggressive. There are two points to be made about the difference in use of force by women and men. First, more women than men experience unwanted sex as a result of force, and second, men's experiences with sexually aggressive women are different from women's experiences with sexually aggressive men (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994; O'Sullivan & Byers, 1993; Lottes, 1992, Poppen & Segal, 1988; Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988; Sandberg et al., 1987; Wilson & Faison, 1979).

Research shows that women use little physical force to make a man have sex (O'Sullivan & Byers, 1993; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994; Lottes, 1992, Poppen & Segal, 1988; Sandberg et al., 1987). A study of male victims and female aggressors found that most men experience unwanted sex from women because of *internalized* traditional male stereotypes about sexuality rather than from *external* pressure from women (Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988). In most cases where a woman attempted to influence a reluctant male to have sex, the woman accepted the man's refusal and did not continue with the behaviour (O'Sullivan & Byers, 1993). In general, women use fewer strategies to obtain sex from men than men use to obtain sex from women (O'Sullivan & Byers, 1993), and when coercion is used, it is usually nonphysical or nonviolent (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994; Lottes, 1992, Poppen & Segal, 1988; Sandberg et al., 1987; Wilson & Faison, 1979).

In a study of students' reactions to hypothetical rape situations involving male victims and female aggressors, male victims were perceived as initiating or encouraging the experience and as enjoying it more than compared to a female victim. This pattern was more pronounced in male respondents than females (Smith et al., 1988). Rather than seeing the coercive nature of the experience, students, especially male students, focused on the sexual aspect of the experience. This highlights the different perceptions of women and men with regard to the seriousness and severity of rape. When men are "raped" by women they see it as a sexually pleasurable experience (Smith et al., 1988). This perception stems from the myth that men are always ready for sex and will always enjoy it (Muehlenhard et al., 1992; Wilson & Faison, 1979). This myth obscures the traumatic nature of rape and prevents men from protecting themselves in the event that they do experience forced or coerced sex (King, 1992).

When men are raped or sexually assaulted by *other men* their experiences reflect those of female victims (King, 1992; Mezey, 1992) and involve more coercive strategies, including physical coercion, to obtain sex (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994). When women and men are raped by men it is not a pleasurable experience but

often degrading and humiliating since men are more likely than women to use physical force or threats (Warshaw, 1993; King, 1992; Mezey, 1992). Male victims' responses to male-initiated assaults were much more adverse than when facing female-initiated incidents (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994).

Experiences that involve physical force or threats are more likely than many other forms of coercion to be identified as sexual assault or rape because these types of experiences closely reflect the stereotypical image of sexual assault. However, not all experiences involving force or threats are identified as such. In looking at the continuum of sexual coercion, the stereotypical image of sexual assault would identify only the most extreme forms of coercion as crimes. However, structural and situational factors mitigate efforts to label even the most extreme forms of sexual coercion as crimes. The subsequent effect of these factors is that very few forms of coercion are identified, labelled or reported.

### *Position of Authority*

If people are reluctant to identify *forced* sex as sexual assault, they are even more reluctant to identify *other* forms of coercion as sexual assault or rape. The image of "real" sexual assault or rape perpetuates the myth that all experiences of sexual assault involve *overt* forms of aggression or threat. Although the image of stranger rape still persists, it has been challenged by feminist researchers who have attempted to uncover the scope of all sexual aggression by measuring acts not traditionally considered aggressive. In attempting to do so, however, they encountered arguments that the focus on less severe forms of sexual coercion would remove the focus from the more severe forms (see for example Gilbert, 1991). Feminists countered with the argument that a focus on *only* the severe forms serves to legitimate the lesser forms (Muehlenhard & Schrag, 1991). In order to evoke real change it is important to label *all* forms of sexual coercion as coercive (Muehlenhard & Schrag, 1991).



One type of assault that may occur between people who know each other is more commonly known as sexual harassment. The most extreme form of sexual harassment occurs when a person in a position of authority uses that authority to coerce the person to engage in unwanted sexual behaviours. When an aggressor abuses a position of trust, power or authority, the victim is deemed unable to consent to sex. If a person uses a position of authority to coerce another person to have sex, a sexual assault has occurred. However, many victims are reluctant to identify this form of harassment or assault as a crime because of the possible negative consequences that the victim may face, such as losing a job or having marks affected by reporting such behaviour.

### *Intoxication*

This issue was previously discussed under the section titled "Alcohol" in this chapter. A victim cannot give consent if they are intoxicated. There are two types of coercive sex that occur involving alcohol. A perpetrator may give a victim alcohol with the intent of reducing their resistance to sex, or they may take advantage of a victim who is clearly intoxicated and unable to give consent (Muehlenhard & Schrag, 1991). Alcohol is more likely to be involved in sexual assault than force (Finley & Corty, 1993). The issue here is "under what circumstances is it coercive for a man to have sex with an intoxicated woman?" (Muehlenhard & Schrag, 1991: 123). Legally, when women experience unwanted sex because they are too intoxicated to resist, they have experienced sexual assault. However, many women are reluctant to identify such behaviours as such because they have been taught to accept the blame for their assaults. If a woman is assaulted while drinking she is blamed for placing herself in a dangerous situation (Burt, 1991). This victim-blaming removes the focus from the perpetrator.

### *Multiple Offenders*

This form of sexual coercion is commonly known as gang rape or sexual assault. This form of assault involves more than one aggressor. Sexual intercourse does not necessarily have to occur since any form of nonconsensual sexual touching is considered sexual assault. Women may know one or more of the aggressors, and may have been involved in consensual sex with one of the men, in which case the man may "share" the woman with his friends (Warshaw, 1988). The following description accurately portrays the "normality" of gang rape.

It wasn't sexual assault. Everybody treated her nicely. Nobody beat her. Nobody even hit her. Everybody was friendly with her. They would buy her things. Nobody forced her to do anything. Nobody *had* to. We were just taking advantage of a girl who was there (Kevin talking about 'Chicken Dinner,' a 15 year old girl that he and his friends gang raped (Bode: 1990: 35, Italics in original).

Kevin was charged with statutory rape. His father was relieved to find out that the charge wasn't rape. "After that he was okay; he was understanding about it. I just got myself *stuck* in this kind of situation (Bode: 1990: 34, Italics in original). Because many forms of gang rape or sexual assault involve intoxicants, many victims are reluctant to report the experience. Again, women may blame themselves for placing themselves in a vulnerable position when they are assaulted in such cases.

## Coercion Less Easily Identified as Sexual Assault

If people are reluctant to label the more easily identified forms of coercion as sexual assault, they are much less likely to identify other forms of coercion as such. Sexual coercion that occurs among people who know each other is less likely to involve force, and more likely to involve verbal or psychological coercion (Bechoffer & Parrot, 1991; Koss et al., 1988; Ryan, 1988). Direct sexual coercion that doesn't involve force often includes "specific pressures to engage in unwanted sexual activity within a relationship" which are "often so subtle and insidious that women may not realized they are being coerced" (Muehlenhard & Schrag, 1991: 116). Forms of coercion that fit into this category include verbal coercion, and/or simply ignoring a victim's protests because a aggressor is too sexually aroused to stop.

### *Verbal Strategies*

Verbal strategies are used to obtain sex through various forms of verbal pressure. Verbal pressure make take the form of continual arguments until the victim relents, the perpetrator threatens to end the relationship if the person doesn't have sex, and the perpetrator gives false information to victim, such as telling them that he/she loves the victim. These are the most common forms of sexual coercion, and differential socialization makes women more vulnerable to verbal sexual coercion from men. (Muehlenhard & Schrag, 1991).

The patterns of female/male communication are markedly different. Male communication typically reflects the need to compete and win, a need to be superior, and a task orientation that expresses itself as dominant, controlling and active. Female communication, on the other hand, reflects the need for approval, a need to connect with people, and it may be interpreted as being accommodating, submissive, and reactive (Agonito, 1993: 76).

## *Sexual Arousal*

Another common strategy to obtain sex occurs when the victim makes it clear that sex is not wanted and the aggressor has sex simply by ignoring the victim's protests and because the aggressor is too sexually aroused to stop (Muehlenhard & Scrag, 1991). This form of coercion would appear to require some level of physical involvement on the part of the aggressor. This type of coercion has been found to be a popular strategy in obtaining sex (Berger et al., 1986). Women's inability to resist this type of coercion may include sex role socialization, fear that the experience will turn violent, disbelief that the experience is occurring, or belief that she is somehow responsible for what is happening (Muehlenhard & Scrag, 1991).

These more subtle forms of coercion are more common than the more severe forms, and as such, when women encounter these types of experiences they are less likely to identify them as crimes. Most assaults are more likely to involve the more subtle types of coercion rather than overt force (Lottes, 1992; Struckman-Johnson, 1988; Berger et al., 1986; Koss, 1985; Rappaport & Burkhart, 1984). When assaults occur between people who know each other, the perpetrator is less likely to use force to obtain sex and there is less likely to be evidence of physical harm such as bruising (Bechoffer & Parrot, 1991). When these more subtle types of sexual coercion occur the victims are far less likely to use active avoidance strategies, to label the experience as rape or sexual assault, or to report them to authorities (Koss et al., 1988; Ryan, 1988). Myths about sexually coercive behaviours offer only a narrow definition of what should be included as criminal acts. These myths effectively prevent victims' from identifying their actual experiences with coercive sex as sexual assault or rape. Again, these myths serve to excuse many behaviours as normative, and to excuse the perpetrator from any responsibility for the coercion. Acts that do not involve overt forms of coercion or that do not involve sexual intercourse are seen as an acceptable or expected part of dating and thus are not judged as crimes.

Women clearly face numerous sources of sexual coercion. Some of these sources of coercion are obvious; others are so embedded in the structure of society that they are rendered almost invisible. Any situation in which women are not free to choose is coercive. As long as women are pressured into sexual relationships or sexual behaviours that they do not truly want, women cannot be free and autonomous. (Muehlenhard & Schrag, 1991: 126).

It is clear that most forms of sexual coercion are not identified, labelled or reported as crimes and, as such, remain hidden.

### Sexual Behaviour

In addition to being reluctant to label other forms of sexual coercion as crimes, the image of "real" sex also limits what is perceived as coercive sex. Because sex scripts are defined from a heterosexual perspective, only acts of *sexual intercourse* are considered real sex (White & Sorenson, 1992; Laws & Schwartz, 1977). "This view suggests that forced "real" sex is more serious than any other form of forced sexual contact" (White & Sorenson, 1992: 190). Again, this myth of what constitutes "real" sex mitigates efforts to define other sexually coercive acts as sexual assault.

### **Resistance**

The stereotypical image of sexual assault involves a stranger attack on a woman who physically resists her attacker. However, very few sexually coercive experience reflect this image. Victims can choose to resist an assault in many ways, they can acquiesce, or give in even though they do not want sex, they can do nothing in response to the aggressor, they can verbally resist by talking to or reasoning with the aggressor, they can physically resist, they can scream, and/or if possible, they can run away from the aggressor (Koss et al., 1988; Siegel et al., 1989; Bateman, 1986). However, victim

resistance appears to be connected to the aggressors' behaviour. Talking appears to be the most common form of resistance, which is not surprising given that most experiences occur with someone the victim knows. Murnen (1989) found that women's most common response to verbal persuasion was to do nothing. Physical resistance is found to occur most often in response to physical force (Seigel et al., 1988). One thing is clear, "the more immediate the resistance, the more likely it is to be successful" (Bateman, 1986: 110). However, women are less likely to use active resistance strategies with someone they know and trust.

Another myth associated with resistance suggests that:

Any healthy woman can resist a rapist if she really wants to, particularly if the rapist is someone she knows. The corollary is that if she got raped, she must not have resisted enough and therefore she wanted it or consented to it (Burt, 1991: 31).

This notion dates back to the antiquated idea that any virtuous woman would allow herself to be killed before she would allow any man not her husband to have sex with her (Donat & D'Emilio, 1992). Where resistance to unwanted sex is minimal, consent is implied (Lisak, 1986). "If a victim simply states her or his unwillingness, or if she or he is too frightened to fight or struggle, the incident would not be labelled as sexual assault" (Muehlenhard et al., 1992: 30). The problem with the myth that any healthy person can resist a rapist is that victims do not expect to be forced or coerced to have sex by someone they know and their ability to resist reflects this expectation (Warshaw & Parrot, 1991). Research shows that men and women interpret resistance differently. In a study of attribution of women's resistance to rape and seduction, females attributed higher resistance to the raped female and lower resistance to the seduced female, but males attributed low resistance to females in *both* situations (Ryan, 1988). Ryan (1988) suggests this is an interesting finding since "men tend to use victim resistance as a key element in defining an event as rape" (242).

## **Post Experience Sexual Involvement**

One of the arguments against defining an experience as rape suggests that women who are "really" sexually assaulted would never engage in sex with the aggressor after the experience (see for example Gilbert, 1991). However, women may be reluctant to identify their experiences as coercive if they have occurred with someone they thought they knew and trusted (Warshaw, 1988). A woman may also continue sexual involvement with the man who assaulted her because this may provide her with the evidence that the experience wasn't really assault. Post sexual involvement provides with a false sense of control over the situation, and often makes the woman vulnerable to further coercion (Murnen, 1989).

## **Effect of the Experience on the Victim**

When sexual assault does occur, it is "a frightening, painful, emotionally scarring experience" (Warshaw, 1993: 364) for both female (Warshaw, 1993) and male victims (King, 1992; Mezey, 1992). A rape that occurs with someone with whom the victim is familiar has the added trauma of being betrayed by a trusted partner or friend (Koss et al., 1988). Victims may be physically harmed during the experience (Leidig, 1992; Isley, 1991). In addition to this victims must also be concerned about sexually transmitted diseases, and females victims must be concerned about pregnancy (Resick, 1993). Victims experience many other effects of sexual assault including depression (Resick, 1993; Leidig, 1992; Isley, 1991); feelings of fear, anxiety, shame, anger, mood swings and phobic reactions (Isley, 1991); distrust of one's reality (Leidig, 1992), withdrawal, isolation and low self-esteem (Resick, 1993; Isley, 1991); psychological problems such as self-mutilation and eating disorders (Leidig, 1992); and sexual and social dysfunction (Resick, 1993; Isley, 1991). If the experience occurs while the victim is a student, the students' marks may suffer or the victim may leave school altogether.

Unfortunately, the structural and situational factors discussed may prevent many victims from identifying their experiences as sexual assault, which hampers the healing process. In order to begin healing, victims must first identify their experiences as sexual assault, and learn how society blames victims for their attacks. The further the assault is from the stereotypical image of sexual assault, the less likely the victim is to identify it as crime. The hiddenness of many forms of sexual assault prevent victims from identifying the experience as it is happening and, as such, hampers victims' ability to actively respond to the assault. For example, if a woman is able to identify that what is happening to her is inappropriate, she will be more likely to respond with reactions that will assist her, such as anger. If she is unable to identify as experience as inappropriate, she may feel fear, which could prevent her from responding at all. This may be seen in the way that some women label their experiences as traumatic, but not criminal.

Some writers, such as Camille Paglia and Katie Roiphe, suggest that women report sexual assault because they regret being sexual. This type of logic is flawed for two reasons: First, in order to regret an experience, some form of choice had to have been made in the first place. In the case of sexual assault, victims' ability to make choices is removed<sup>1</sup> and it becomes impossible to regret something over which the victim had no control. Hutchinson & McDaniel (1986) found that:

conventional therapies for victims of sexual assault tend to perpetuate the existing belief structure about rape . . . by isolating and blaming the victim. In contrast, feminist counselling and feminist self-help groups remove the woman's false sense of guilt, validate the woman's experience with sexual violence, and enable the victim to develop and understanding of the social structural context in which sexual assault occurs (17).

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<sup>1</sup>This bit of wisdom comes from Jenny Hankins, a volunteer at the University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre, as passed on by Sandra Beggs, Director of the Sexual Assault Centre, in a personal communication September 12, 1995.



Second, women's feelings of shame about engaging in sexual behaviour is grounded in a culture that does not offer women positive role models for sexually active women. Women are constrained by narrow, restrictive roles that dichotomously assign them as either virgins or whores. It appears, then, that the effects of the experience on the victim are also affected by the structural and situational factors discussed.

### **Assignment of Responsibility for the Experience**

Burkhart & Stanton (1980) used the phrase "socially acceptable exclusion of responsibility" (234) to refer to the way society blames victims for their assaults. If the experience reflects the stereotypical image of sexual assault, involves overt force with a stranger, and the victim actively resists, then the victim may be excused from responsibility for perpetuating the assault. In any other circumstances, the victim is perceived as somehow responsible for the assault. This is known as victim blaming. Victim blaming myths suggest that something about the victim caused the assault, thereby excusing the perpetrator. The responsibility for the assault is placed squarely on the shoulders of the victim regardless of what the victim does or doesn't do. Even in "typical" rapes or sexual assaults, the victim was somehow responsible for the assault because a woman may be seen as leading the rapist on by some behaviour or by appearance (Burt, 1991).

If women are seen as responsible for stranger assaults they are seen as more responsible for assaults that occur with acquaintances or partners (Szymanski et al., 1993). In comparing hypothetical assault situations, men were more likely than women to attribute responsibility for an assault to the woman (Thornton et al., 1981), and to blame women for their victimization in date or acquaintance assaults (Harrison et al., 1991). When comparisons are made between hypothetical stranger and acquaintance assaults, attributions of responsibility were stronger for women who know the attacker (Bridges & McGrail, 1989). Judgement of responsibility for sexual assault also varies according to gender (Gray et al., 1993; Szymanski et al., 1993). Males are more likely

than women to blame victims for their assaults (Gray et al., 1993). In comparing date rape and "typical rape" scenarios, most men (65%) judged women as responsible for the assault in a date rape situation while some men (18%) *still* judged a woman as responsible for her attack during a "typical rape" scenario (Quackenbush, 1991).

Women who are assaulted by someone they know are blamed for using poor judgement by trusting the wrong man (Beneke, 1993). This myth is particularly interesting in light of the fact that most assaults are committed by someone the victim knows and trusts, and the fact that the stereotypical image of rape prevents women from viewing their dating partners as potential rapists (Burt, 1991). Murnen (1989) found that most women who reported unwanted sexual experiences accepted the blame for the experience, and were more likely to blame themselves if they knew the man. If they did not know the man well, they were able to assign the blame to him, especially if he used overt coercion such as physical force, and if their own resistance was strong. However, even in some cases where the men were strongly coercive, the women blamed themselves for the experience.

Another victim blaming myth suggests that even if a victim is sexually assaulted she/he probably deserved it or even enjoyed it (Beneke, 1993: 355; Leidig, 1992). Women's fear of rape is often trivialized by jokes such as "If you're going to be raped, just lie back and enjoy it" (Leidig, 1992:150). "The victims of rape are often portrayed as secretly enjoying their victimization - a depiction common in the media. Movie images often present the woman as resisting only initially and eventually being overwhelmed by sexual desire despite her original protests" (Donat & D'Emilio, 1992: 16). In reality, the consequences of rape are serious. External victim blaming often leads the victim to internalize the blame. Victims who blame themselves for the assault add to the trauma of the rape and slow recovery (Wyatt et al., 1991; Katz & Burt, 1988).

These myths prevent victims from identifying their assaults as crimes and allow perpetrators to justify their coercive behaviour. If victims are afraid that they will be blamed for the assault they will be less likely to report the experience to police and will be less likely to find the appropriate support needed to recover. One thing that all victim blaming myths have in common is that "when a rape victim is blamed for having stepped outside the inscribed boundaries of safety or sexuality, the frame of understanding . . . is shifted away from the perpetrator and onto the victim" (Harris, 1990-91: 38).

### **Reporting Behaviour**

Many forms of sexual victimization go unreported because of the structural and situational factors that prevent victims from identifying their experiences as crimes. Victims may be reluctant to report their experiences with coercive sex because they have been taught that these experiences are private matters, rather than experiences that occur within a structure that perpetuates such behaviour. A victim's reluctance to report may be valid given that the criminal justice system requires such stringent evidence to convict an aggressor of assault. The closer the experience is to the stereotypical image, the more likely it is to be reported. In a study of consent based on injury and timeliness of reporting, Harris & Weiss (1987) found that women who were injured and who reported their experiences immediately were judged to have given less consent, than uninjured women who waited to report. This finding was stronger for men than for women, suggesting that men assign a higher likelihood of consent than women.

Underreporting of sexual coercion is a common problem, one that has been challenged by feminist researchers who seek to reveal the continuum of sexual coercion by exposing previously "hidden" experiences (see for example Koss and colleagues).

## **EFFECTS OF STRUCTURAL AND SITUATIONAL FACTORS**

This chapter has reviewed the various ways in which structural and situational factors mitigate attempts to define sexually coercive experiences as crimes or even as coercive. Only very extreme types of coercion are defined as sexual assault, yet these characterize only a small percentage of victims real experiences with sexual assault. The majority of sexually coercive experiences remain unidentified and unlabelled as crimes because they are hidden by the structural and situational factors that legitimize such behaviours as normative. One way to measure the extent to which these structural and situational factors are present in society is to measure sexual assault and rape myths.

Rape myths are the mechanism that people use to justify dismissing an incident of sexual assault from the category of "real" rape. Accepting or believing rape myths leads to a more restrictive definition of rape and is thus rape-supportive, because such beliefs deny the reality of many actual rapes. Rejecting these assaults as not being "real" rapes makes rape prosecution harder, the victim's recovery more difficult, and the assailant's action safer. Rejecting or disbelieving rape myths has the opposite effect. It leads to including more concrete instances within the definition of what is a real rape (Burt, 1991: 27).

It appears that if people accept the myths associated with sexual assault and rape, they would hold a relatively narrow definition of what constitutes sexual assault, one which would reflect the stereotypical image of sexual assault. Conversely, rejecting these myths would result in a broader more inclusive definition which would challenge this stereotypical image of sexual assault. The structural and situational factors discussed in this chapter suggest that certain members of society may be more likely than others to accept these myths.

Research has shown that , in general, males accept rape myths more than females (Szymanski, 1993; Harrison, 1991; Borden et al., 1988; Garrett-Gooding & Senter, 1987; Burt, 1980), which is consistent with research that suggests that most aggressors are male and most victims female. Other research has established links between the

acceptance of rape myths and males' sexually coercive behaviour (Gray et al., 1993; Reilly et al., 1992; Muehlenhard & Falcon, 1990; Burkhart & Stanton, 1988; Koss & Dinero, 1988; Jenkins & Dambrot, 1987; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987; Peterson & Franzese, 1987; Koss, 1985; Koss et al., 1985; Rapport & Burkhart, 1984). This research shows that aggressive males are more likely than other males to accept the myths associated with sexual assault. However, Muehlenhard & Linton (1987) caution that it is difficult to determine if the attitudes associated with sexual aggression are causes or consequences of the act.

While research has uncovered attitudinal differences between groups of males, most research has found no attitudinal differences between victimized and nonvictimized women (Gray et al., 1993; Reilly et al., 1992; Jenkins & Dambrot, 1987; Sandberg et al., 1987; Koss, 1985; Korman & Leslie, 1982; Wilson & Faison, 1979). In general, women hold similar attitudes toward sexual assault and rape regardless of their victimization status. The many studies which found no attitudinal differences between victimized and nonvictimized women are particularly interesting in light of the myths that blame women for their assaults. It has been suggested that women who hold nonstereotypical attitudes about sexual assault and rape would be less likely to encounter sexual coercion (Lottes, 1992; Korman & Leslie, 1982). While there was no evidence for this assumption, there is some evidence that women who do not conform to traditional stereotypes are over-represented as victims (Korman & Leslie, 1982; Wilson & Faison, 1977). This finding may be attributed to the fact that women who do not hold stereotypical attitudes about rape are more willing to report their experiences rather than accept them as normative (Korman & Leslie, 1982). This is a key point since victims who reject rape myths may be more likely to identify coercive experiences as sexual assault, and thus will be more likely to report these experiences. Evidence of this has been found in the research of Kahn et al. (1994), who suggest that women may not define their experiences with coercive sex as rape or sexual assault because they carry in their heads a script of the stereotypical image of rape. Kahn et al. (1994) conducted a study of rape victims and their rape scripts. Victims were divided into two categories,

those who identified their experiences as rape (acknowledged victims) and those who did not identify their experiences as rape (unacknowledged victims).

Unacknowledged rape victims possess more violent, stranger rape scripts than do acknowledged rape victims . . . . Apparently, most unacknowledged victims do not define their rape experience as rape because they have a rape script of violent, stranger, blitz rape which does not match their experience of being raped in a less forceful manner by someone with whom they were acquainted (Kahn et al., 1994: 53).

Other research found that many women whose experiences met the legal definition of rape were reluctant to define or label their experience as such (Reilly et al., 1992; Koss et al., 1987). Researchers such as Gilbert (1991) suggested that women should know when they have been raped and should have the right to define their own experiences. But feminist researchers argued that allowing women to define their own experiences as sexual assault or rape "has the advantage of respecting victims' feelings and giving them the power to name and interpret their own experiences" but this practice is difficult because "victims' decisions about whether a rape has occurred are likely to be influenced by their stereotypes" (Muehlenhard et al., 1992: 37). A victim's definition of a sexually coercive situation depends on how the experience fits the social stereotype of rape (Skelton & Burkhart, 1980).

Women's definitions of rape are also based on rape myths . . . . Rape myths have the effect of labelling as 'real rape' only a narrow set of events, such an attack by a stranger with a weapon - events that are incongruent with the overwhelming majority of incidents of coercive sex. Thus, women learn definitions of rape designed to exclude their coercive experiences from that label (Muehlenhard et al., 1992: 40).

It appears that the structural and situational factors affecting sexual assault have real implications for victims in society. If victims do not identify and label their coercive experiences as sexual assault then they will not report them to police, which in turn affects the perception that sexual assault is not a problem in society. As Burt (1991) suggests, "The culture reinforces the behaviour and the behaviour reinforces the culture and becomes reality. A continuing cycle of beliefs denies real victim status to women and makes it very hard to be a woman who has been raped" (27). "The victim is left with feelings of guilt and powerlessness, while the aggressors' behaviour is left undisputed" (Donat & D'Emilio, 1992: 16). This contributes to the continuation of a societal problem that disproportionately affects women.

## **THE PROBLEM TO BE STUDIED**

Studies indicate that university students are at risk of sexual assault because of their age, dating patterns, and alcohol consumption (Koss, 1988; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987). The 1991 study of Gender, Sexuality and Unwanted Sexual Experiences revealed that three-quarters of University of Alberta students did not know if sexual assault was a problem on campus. The literature suggests that structural and situational factors obscure all but the most overt forms of sexual coercion and that these factors are reflected in the myths about sexual assault and rape. This study examines students' attitudes to determine to what extent they accept or reject the stereotypical image of sexual assault. Students who reject the stereotypical image of sexual assault should be able to identify a broader range of coercive experiences as sexual assault. Conversely, students who do not reject the stereotypical image of sexual assault would identify only a narrow range of extreme coercive behaviour as sexual assault. This study also explores students' experiences with unwanted sex to determine if the structural and situational factors presented in this thesis prevent University of Alberta students from identifying experiences as sexual assault.

This thesis consists of several chapters. Chapter Two presents the methodology and original findings of the 1991 study. Chapter Three presents the attitudinal analysis, and explores students' attitudes by sex and experience. Chapter Four offers a quantitative analysis of female victims' experiences with unwanted sex according to their definition of their experience. Chapter Five offers a new and unique data analysis technique, which reconstructs individual vignettes from aggregate data. Chapter Six discusses the findings of the study.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The data used in this study were originally gathered in 1991 to determine the amount of unwanted sex that was occurring among University of Alberta students. The project was co-funded by the Office of the Dean of Student Services, the Students' Union, and the Vice-President, Research. At the time the original research was conducted, much of what is now known about sexual assault and rape did not exist and, as such, the research reflects that lack of current knowledge. In spite of these limitations, the data offers a wealth of insight not previously garnered by other studies.

The original study involved a non-probability sample of undergraduate students selected into the sample by choosing classrooms. Classrooms were chosen according known characteristics of the undergraduate population, including gender, year of program and faculty, based on annual data collected by the University of Alberta. While the projected sample was 1,200 participants, a total of 1,015 undergraduate students participated in the study approximating a fairly representative sample. Specific details about sampling method and results can be found in Elliott et al., (1992).

The questionnaire was administered by male and female pairs of students who were specially trained to deal with problems arising from the study and to standardize the conditions under which the questionnaire was administered and data collected. In order to ensure the protection of human subjects, the respondents were told in verbal and written instructions that their participation was completely voluntary, that they could choose to not participate, that they could withdraw their participation at any time without penalty. The response rate was 93%. In order to protect students who did not wish to

participate, students were asked to remain in their desks for at least fifteen minutes, which was the shortest possible answer time. Thus, non-participating students who left after the allotted time were not distinguishable from those who answered the questionnaire. Some deception was employed for ethical reasons. Students were told that two forms of the questionnaire existed, a short form and a long form, and that these two forms were randomly distributed in the class. However, only one questionnaire was used. This was done to protect not only those who did not wish to participate and/or those who had no sexual experience, but also those who did have unwanted sexual experiences. This deception meant that students were unable to identify other students' possible sexual experiences (either unwanted or lack of) by the length of time spent answering the questionnaire. Instructors were asked to be absent during the questionnaire administration and all students were provided with a list of telephone numbers where expert advice and counselling could be obtained.

The University of Alberta Sex, Gender and Unwanted Sexual Experiences Survey used a self-administered questionnaire, which was adapted from Koss's National Survey of Inter-gender Relationships (Koss and Gidycz, 1985; Koss and Oros, 1982). Koss's instrument was adapted, rather than used in its original form, for two specific reasons. First, Koss's study measured only the victimization experiences of women and the aggression experiences of men. The University of Alberta study measured the victimization and aggression experiences of both females and males. Second, the instrument was adapted to meet the specific needs of the University of Alberta. The following is a discussion of the University of Alberta instrument, of how it differs from Koss's instrument, and of some of the basic findings from the original survey.

## THE INSTRUMENT AND BASIC DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Table 2-1 offers a visual depiction of the routing used in the University of Alberta questionnaire.

**Table 2-1  
Questionnaire Design**

<u>Section A (All)</u> Background Questions & 2 Screening Questions for Routing			
No to #1 and #2 Go to Section F	Yes to #1/No to #2 Go to Section B (Victims)	No to #1/Yes to #2 Go to Section D (Aggressors)	Yes to #1 and #2 Random assignment into Section B or D
<u>Section B (Victims)</u>  Attempted Experiences Completed Experiences After Age 14 While Registered at U of A Frequency/Severity for each Experience Go to Section C		<u>Section D (Aggressors)</u>  Attempted Experiences Completed Experiences After Age 14 While Registered at U of A Frequency/Severity for each Experience Go to Section E	
<u>Section C (Victims)</u> Information on most serious experience while registered at U of A Go to Section F		<u>Section E (Aggressors)</u> Information on most serious experience while registered at U of A Go to Section F	
<u>Section F (All)</u> Attitudes			
<u>Section G (Answered by Choice)</u> Open-ended responses			

### Section A: Background Data

Section A, answered by *all* participating students, gathered general background information. Many of these questions were similar to those asked in Koss's questionnaire.

## Study Participants

The median age of the University of Alberta study respondents was 21 years. Fifty-nine percent of the sample was female, 41% was male. Most of the students lived off-campus (88%) and were single (81%), 16% were married or lived in a common-law relationship. Slightly more than half the students (53%) said that they did not work and almost half were employed part-time. Almost all students (96%) classified themselves as being full-time students. One in three (33%) reported some involvement in university clubs or groups. Close to half the students had been at the University of Alberta for less than two years. Over half were either in the first or second year of their program.

## Sexual Behaviour of Students

Prior to asking students about their experience with attempted unwanted sex, the questionnaire included a number of general questions (for all respondents) about previous sexual experiences and attitudes towards sex. Using Koss's broad definition of sexual experience (sex play, sex acts or sexual intercourse), 12% reported no previous sexual experience and 52% reported a previous sexual experience with between one and five different people. A significant number of students stated that they did not engage in sexual activity, particularly sex acts and intercourse. Most students who did engage in sex indicated that they found sexual activity to be physically satisfying. All respondents were asked about the "level of intimacy needed for you to approve of sexual intercourse before marriage for yourself." Their answers reflected a variety of diverse views on this subject. Seventeen percent of the sample said it was not permissible to have premarital sexual intercourse. More than one-third (36%) expressed acceptance if "in love," 16% said premarital intercourse was OK in regular dating relationships, 11% approved for casual dates if both parties desired it, and 17% approved under any circumstances if both parties were interested. In brief, these results reveal a sample with considerable sexual experience and with reasonably permissive views on premarital sexual activity. However, a minority of respondents reported little or no sexual experience, and a

minority did not approve of premarital intercourse under any circumstances. These findings appear to indicate a fairly typical sample of undergraduates with respect to sexual experience, activity and interest.

### Routing From Section A

Respondents in Section A were then directed to go to different sections of the questionnaire based on the following two screening questions:

"Has another person ever tried to have sex with you when you did not want sex at that time?"

"Have you ever tried to have sex with another person when that person did not want sex at that time?"

Sex was defined for the students as:

- (a) Sex Play (sexual kissing, stroking and or petting),
- (b) Sex Acts (acts such as oral-genital sex, anal-genital sex, penetration of the vagina or anus by objects other than the penis, and/or other sex acts, but not intercourse)
- (c) Sexual Intercourse (penetration of the vagina by a man's penis, no matter how slight, whether or not ejaculation occurs).

Students were asked to respond to both questions. The two questions were designed to divide students into one of four groups, those with no unwanted experiences, those who received unwanted attempts, those who initiated unwanted attempts, and those who had both received and initiated attempts with unwanted sex

Individuals who answered "No" to both questions and who had never had any experience with attempted unwanted sex were instructed to skip to Section F, the attitude section. Those who answered "Yes" to the first question but "No" to the second were

identified as having received attempted unwanted sexual experiences and were routed to Section B to answer questions about their victimization experiences. Those who answered "Yes" to the second question and "No" to the first question were identified as having attempted unwanted sex with another person and were routed to Section D to answer questions about their aggression experiences. Those who answered "Yes" to both questions were identified as having both experiences and were randomly assigned, on the basis of their birthday, to either the victimization section (Section B) or the aggression category (Section D). While it would have been interesting to gather specific detailed data on students who had both types of experiences, time limitations made this impossible. Table 2-2 provides a breakdown of these four categories by sex.

**Table 2-2  
Categories of Attempted Unwanted Sexual Experiences by Sex**

Category	Female	Male	Total
No Experiences	279	265	544
Victim Only Experiences	270	39	309
Aggressor Only Experiences	2	52	54
Both Experiences	43	56	99
Total	594	412	N = 1006*

\* Missing Observations N=9

### Broad Victimization and Aggression Categories

Results show that approximately half of the females and two-thirds of the males indicated that they had never experienced or initiated unwanted sex. According to these results, then the majority of University of Alberta students either had not participated in sexual experiences at all or had only been involved in consensual or wanted sexual experiences. Approximately half of the females said that they had been involved in situations where another person had tried to have sex when they did not want to, a

finding that is not surprising given the sexual double standard and sex scripts. What is surprising is that although half of the women said that they had experienced attempts at unwanted sex, only 13% of the men said that they had tried to have unwanted sex with another person. This may be a good indication that men do not perceive that their partners do not want sex or they are not willing to disclose such information in a survey. Or, it is possible that a small number of men are responsible for the majority of women's unwanted sexual experiences. It is important to note that these findings do not represent matched pairs of male-female unwanted sexual experiences. Instead, the females may have experienced attempted unwanted sex with people outside of the university, just as the males may have attempted unwanted sex with other people not associated with the University of Alberta.

Another interesting finding is that a surprisingly small number of females ( $n=2$ ) fell into the "aggressor only" category and only about 7% said that they had both experiences. Two points can be made here. First, according to these findings, very few women assume the role of aggressor-only in their sexual relations, which is a good indication that the majority of women still assume a less active role rather than an aggressive role in sexual relationships. Second, some women have chosen to adapt a more active role in initiating sex, and this challenges the image that women are always only passive in their sexual experiences. Unfortunately, these questions deal only with *unwanted* attempted experiences, and so it is impossible to determine how active or passive women may be during their wanted experiences. However, the overall number of women who reported attempts at unwanted sex with other people is relatively low.

Approximately 10% of men said that they experienced victim-only attempts at unwanted sex and approximately 14% said they had both experiences. This means that about one-quarter of all men experienced attempted unwanted sex. This certainly affects the image that men are only aggressive when it comes to sexual relationships. However, approximately one-quarter of the men also indicated that they had tried to have unwanted sex with another person.

Perhaps the difference between victim and aggressor responses is the difference in perceptions regarding what constitutes unwanted sex. Victims are asked to identify experiences that happened to them, and thus, would be capable of identifying if their experiences were wanted or not. The difficulty with identifying experiences that another person did not want is that the respondent has to use outside cues to determine if the sex is really unwanted. Given the previous discussion about the ways in which men have been taught to disregard women's resistance to sex, it is not surprising that almost two-thirds of them said they never attempted to have unwanted sex. It is possible that these men perceived their attempts as wanted when in fact the women had different perceptions. Thus the difference in male aggression and female victimization responses. It is surprising, however, that one-quarter of all the male respondents indicated that they had tried to have sex with another person who did not want sex at that time. Of course, trying to have sex and actually having sex are two different things.

### **Sections B and Section D**

These two sections dealt with the actual completed unwanted sexual experiences of students. Sections B and D were virtually identical to each other and it is here that the that the adaptation of Koss's questionnaire becomes most apparent. One portion of Koss's instrument was made up of the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES), which used ten questions to ask about a variety of *behaviourally specific* coercive and sexual experiences (see Table 2-3).



**Table 2-3  
Koss's SES\***

Have you given in to sex play when you didn't want to because you were overwhelmed by a man's continual arguments and pressure?
Have you had sex play when you didn't want to because a man used his position of authority to make you?
Have you had sex play when you didn't want to because a man threatened or used some degree of physical force?
Have you had a man attempt sexual intercourse when you didn't want to by threatening or using some degree of force, but intercourse didn't occur?
Have you had a man attempt sexual intercourse with you by giving you alcohol or drugs, but intercourse didn't occur?
Have you given in to sexual intercourse when you didn't want to because you were overwhelmed by a man's continual arguments and pressure?
Have you had sexual intercourse when you didn't want to because a man used his position of authority to make you?
Have you had sexual intercourse when you didn't want to because a man gave you alcohol or drugs?
Have you had sexual intercourse when you didn't want to because a man threatened or used some degree of physical force?
Have you had sex acts when you didn't want to because a man threatened or used some degree of physical force?

\* Taken from the National Survey of Inter-Gender Relationships

Koss reasoned that asking a woman if she had been raped would result in a lower estimate than if she were asked the questions found in Table 2-3. Recall the previous discussion that a woman's definition of sexual assault is affected by the societal definition of sexual assault. Koss wanted to measure experiences that were previously hidden from the public because of this societal definition of sexual assault and rape. The SES revealed more victimization experiences with coercive sex than previously identified by official statistics. While Koss's instrument was vital in its ability to reveal previously hidden coercive sex, it was impossible to determine if a student responding "yes" to more than one of the ten questions was reporting only one incident involving several behaviours or reporting several separate incidents. For example, a woman who experienced an unwanted sexual experience involving a person in a position of authority who used continual arguments and pressure to make her have sex acts, sex play and sexual intercourse would answer "yes" to several of Koss's ten questions. It was not possible to determine if more than one experience occurred or if multiple coercive strategies and sexual behaviours were used. Thus, Koss's SES was adapted to provide more detailed information. While the adaptation offered more information it also made direct comparisons to Koss's research impossible. However, Dekeseredy et al. (1993),

and Dekeseredy & Kelly (1993), conducted comparable research with the SES, and discovered that the rate of unwanted sex among Canadian students was at least as high as their United States counterparts.

The University of Alberta instrument was designed using the assumption that students would be able to remember specific unwanted sexual experiences, and that they would be willing to provide information about these experiences. The problem with this assumption, of course, is that students may have experienced unwanted sex that they viewed as normative, and, as a result of this perception, they may not have reported these experiences in the study. In this way, Koss's approach may be superior. In spite of this limitation, the University of Alberta instrument gathered some important information.

In Section B and D, students were asked to indicate how many separate attempts they had experienced or made. They were then asked to indicate how many of these attempts resulted in someone having unwanted sex with them or in them having unwanted sex with someone else.

"Of these experience(s), how many resulted in the person(s) having sex with you when you did not want sex at that time? (This means that the person did something sexual to you that you did not want)" (Asked in Section B)

or

"Of these experiences, how many resulted in you having sex with another person when they did not want sex at that time? (This means that you did something sexual to the other person that they did not want)? (Asked in Section D)

Students were then asked to indicate if any of these experiences occurred (a) after age 14 and (b) while registered at the University of Alberta. Table 2-4 indicates the results of this portion of the questionnaire.

**Table 2-4  
Unwanted Sexual Experiences by Sex and Victimization/Aggression**

Category	Victimization Experiences		Aggression Experiences	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
<b>Attempted</b>				
Before randomization	279	39	2	52
After randomization	288	69	22	73
<b>Completed</b>				
Ever	172	31	5	29
Before Age 14	22	3	1	0
At U. of A.	62	16	2	17

The randomization process randomly assigned students in the "Both Experiences" category into either the "Victimization" or "Aggression" categories. As seen in Table 2-4, the randomization process appears to have worked as planned since equal percentages of the women and men in the "Both Experiences" category were assigned to the victim and aggressor categories. For example half of the women in the "Both Experiences" category (see Table 2-2) answered questions about victimization experiences, and half answered questions about aggression experiences. Men from the "Both Experiences" were equally divided between the "Victimization" or "Aggression" categories.

Victimization and Aggression Categories After Randomization Procedure

When comparing the difference between attempted and completed experiences for victims, a gender difference is evident. More women (60%) experienced unwanted sex from the attempt that were able to prevent it (40%). On the other hand, more men (55%) than women (40%) were able to prevent the other person from having unwanted sex with them. In total, one-third of all the women in the sample experienced completed unwanted sex compared to 8% of all men. These results are interesting for a couple of

reasons. First, the data reveal that men are less likely to encounter attempts at unwanted sex and are more likely than women to protect themselves from unwanted sex. Women, on the other hand, are at a higher risk for unwanted sex than are men and are less able to prevent the experience from continuing. Second, the data also reveal that men do experience unwanted sex and women are capable of thwarting unwanted sexual attention. This challenges the image of men as always aggressive and women as always victims. Similar patterns are visible in the aggression experiences of women and men. Fewer women (25%) than men (40%) succeed in obtaining sex during an attempt with an unwilling partner. In looking at the total sample, less than one percent of the women report completed unwanted sexual experiences compared to 7% of the men. Overall, the results of this study reveal that while some women are sexually aggressive, men are much more likely than women to be sexually aggressive.

#### Experiences Before Age 14

Very few cases of sexual victimization and aggression occurred before age 14. Of students reporting a completed unwanted sexual experience, about 10% of both women and men said that the experience occurred before they were age 14. Overall, approximately 4% of all women and less than 1% of all the men in the sample reported an experience that could be defined as child sexual abuse. It is interesting to note the evidence of the aggression question was worded to refer to the respondent's rather than the victims' age. It is interesting that only one woman and no men said that they had unwanted sex with another person before the respondents themselves were age 14. Because no age is provided for the victim, it is impossible to determine if this is child sexual abuse.

## Experiences While a University of Alberta Student

Students were also asked to indicate which of their completed unwanted sexual experiences occurred while registered at the University of Alberta. The definition of a registered student included:

Students registered during Fall, Winter, Spring or Summer sessions including class breaks such as Christmas, summer and Reading Week. For example if you are working away from the campus for the summer but plan to register or are registered for the next term, you are considered a registered University of Alberta student.

Approximately half of the men and one-third of the women said their victimization experiences occurred while at the University of Alberta. Two of the five women and 60% of the men said their aggression experiences occurred while at the University of Alberta. Because the University was concerned specifically with University-related experiences, only those students reporting experiences while registered as University of Alberta students were required to provide further details. Unfortunately, this decision meant that important data about students' experiences before they came to the University were lost.

## Summary of Victimization and Aggression Experiences

In summary, the victimization rates are higher for women than men in all categories and the aggression rates were higher for men than for women, which shows an expected gender pattern for unwanted sexual experiences. The study also revealed that men can be victims and women can be aggressors. In general, victimization and aggression rates are probably under-estimated given the randomization for respondents reporting both victimization and aggression experiences. As well, students experiencing sexual victimization may be less likely to attend class, may leave the University altogether, or may be reluctant to report on painful experiences. Aggressors may be

reluctant to report on experiences which they perceive to be socially unacceptable or illegal. Given the non-random sample of students who were surveyed in this study, caution should be used about reporting precise estimates of the incidence of unwanted sexual activity among university students. Nevertheless, there is evidence of a problem. A total of 78 students in this study (approximately 8% of the total sample), most of them women, reported victimization experiences while at the University of Alberta. A total of 19 students, most of them male, reported aggression experiences while enrolled at the University of Alberta. Since this sample contained only a fraction of the total undergraduate body, no doubt many more students would have reported such incidents had they been included in the study.

#### Strategies and Sexual Behaviour During Experience

For each of the separate and self-reported incidents of completed unwanted sexual experiences, up to a total of four separate incidents, students whose experiences occurred at the University of Alberta were asked to provide information about the type of strategies used to obtain sex. Students were able to indicate, by answering "yes" or "no," to each of the ten different strategies, which ones were used to obtain sex for each separate unwanted sexual experience (See Table 2-5). This allowed students to indicate if multiple strategies were used to obtain unwanted sex.

**Table 2-5  
University of Alberta Questions About Strategies for Victims**

During this University of Alberta experience, the person had sex with you even though you did not want sex at that time because:
The person was so sexually aroused you couldn't stop them
The person overwhelmed you with continual arguments and convinced you to have sex even though you did not want to
The person gave you false information to get you to have sex with them (eg. they said they loved you, etc.)
The person threatened to end your relationship if you didn't have sex with them at that time
The person used their position of authority over you to coerce you to have sex
You were too drunk or stoned to resist
The person threatened you with physical force and or a weapon (eg. the person threatened to hold you down or hit you)
The person used physical force and/or a weapon on you but you weren't severely hurt (eg. the person held you down or hit you and/or used a knife etc. You weren't hurt at all or you suffered minor cuts and/or bruises)
The person used physical force and/or a weapon on you and you were severely hurt (eg. the person held you down or hit you and/or used a knife etc. You were wounded or maimed)
Other
What is the most sex that occurred during this experience? a. Sexual Intercourse b. Sex Acts, but not sexual intercourse c. Sex Play, but not sex acts or intercourse

These coercive strategies were adapted from Koss's SES. The only coercive category not included in Koss's SES is "other," which was used to pick up on coercive behaviours not listed. For each separate completed unwanted experience, students were also asked to indicate the most sex that occurred by responding to the following mutually exclusive categories: (a) Sexual Intercourse, (b) Sex Acts, but not sexual intercourse, (c) Sex Play, but not sex acts or intercourse. The ability to indicate a number of coercive strategies and a choice of sexual behaviours allowed students to provide more detailed information than allowed by the SES instrument. It is important to note that the wording for aggressors was slightly different, as shown in Table 2-6.

**Table 2-6**  
**University of Alberta Questions About Strategies for Aggressors**

During this University of Alberta experience, you had sex with another person even though they did not want sex at that time because:
You were so sexually aroused you couldn't stop
You overwhelmed them with continual arguments and convinced them to have sex
You gave them false information to get them to have sex with them (eg. you told them you loved them, etc.)
You threatened to end your relationship with them if they didn't have sex at that time
You used your position of authority over them to coerce them to have sex
They were too drunk or stoned to resist
You threatened them with physical force and or a weapon (eg. You threatened to hold them down or hit them)
You used physical force and/or a weapon on them but they weren't severely hurt (eg. you held them down or hit them and/or used a knife etc. They weren't hurt at all or they suffered minor cuts and/or bruises)
You used physical force and/or a weapon on them and they were severely hurt (eg. you held them down or hit them and/or used a knife etc. They were wounded or maimed)
Other

Of the 88 separate victimization cases involving females, half (N=44) involved only one strategy, 20% involved two strategies, 20% involved 3 strategies, and less than 10% involved four or more strategies. Of the 29 victimization involving males, almost half involved only one strategy, one-third involved 2 strategies, and about 20% involved 3 or more strategies. Very few of the victimization experiences involved overt force and many were a result of sexual arousal, continual arguments, false information, intoxication or "other." Where more severe strategies were employed (threat or use of force), the experience often resulted in sexual intercourse rather than sex play or sex acts.

Of those student who reported a completed aggression experience, only 2 women responded as aggressors. In both of the female cases, the experience went as far as sexual intercourse and only one strategy, sexual arousal, was used. Of the 24 separate experiences involving male aggressors, 22 resulted in sexual intercourse. This may mean that men do not consider any act less than sexual intercourse worth reporting. Of the 24



cases, most (80%) involved only one strategy, the remainder of the cases (20%) involved either two or three strategies. As with the victims, sexual arousal and continual arguments were used in over half the cases of the male aggression experiences. In one-third of the cases, men indicated that their experiences involved "other" strategies. No men reported using intoxicants or any form of force as a strategy. The absence of findings for these categories may indicate that men who have been involved in activities involving alcohol or force are reluctant to report their experiences even in an anonymous questionnaire or they "remember" the experience as one in which the other person was a willing partner.

#### Routing From Sections B and D

Students were then asked to consider their most serious and/or only experience while registered at the University of Alberta and to provide further detailed information about that one experience. The choice to have students provide detailed information about only one experience was made because of time constraints. Some students took as long as 45 minutes to answer the questionnaire and provide detailed information about their one experience. Respondents were then routed into the appropriate next section, Section C for victims, Section E for aggressors, where they were asked for detailed information about their most serious (or only) experience.

## **Sections C and E**

Students were asked to provide detailed information about their one or most serious experience by responding to close-ended questions, many of which were taken from Koss's questionnaire. The following results were taken from the original study.

### Location and Time

Most unwanted sexual experiences occurred off-campus, in the home of the victim or aggressor, during the weekend, between 8:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m.. Thirteen percent of all experiences occurred at a University of Alberta sponsored event.

### Relationship

Students were asked to provide information about their relationship to the other person. All reported unwanted sexual experiences involved male-female pairings, except one male victim who reported an experience with another male. Ninety-eight percent of the victims and all of the aggressors said that they knew the person involved in the unwanted sexual experience. Aggressors (all but one) were more likely than victims (approximately half) to know the other person very well. Approximately half of the female victims compared to one-third of the male victims said that they didn't know the person well or at all. Five percent of the female victims and two male victims said they didn't know the other person at all. Two female victims said their experience happened with a person in a position of authority. Only one person from each of the male and female victim groups compared with 17% of the male aggressors said the experience happened with a spouse.

### Prior Sexual Involvement

Aggressors were more likely than victims to have engaged in previous sex with the person. Half of the victims had *never* had sex with the person previously compared to less than one-quarter of the aggressors.

### Alcohol Use

In approximately 40% of the victim-reported cases, both the aggressor and victim used alcohol. In slightly less than one-quarter of the cases as reported by aggressors did the victim or aggressor use alcohol. It appears that victims are more likely than aggressors to report the use of intoxicants in an unwanted sexual experience.

### Consent

Most (83%) of the female victims believed that they were somewhat to very clear that they did not want sex compared to one-quarter of the male victims. Very few male aggressors in this sample believed that the victim was clear that sex was not wanted. Instead 73% of the male aggressors believed that the victim offered "little" or "no" clarity that sex was not wanted. In general, female victims see themselves as offering more resistance and being more clear about not wanting sex than as perceived by male aggressors. This may be attributed to the sexual double standard and sex scripts that encourage men to ignore women's resistance.

## Victim Response

Victims and aggressors were asked how much resistance they offered. Female victims perceived their resistance as stronger (44% said they resisted quite a bit) than did male victims (13%) and male aggressors (8%). Conversely male victims (40%) and male aggressors (25%) were more likely to say no resistance was offered compared to female victims (8%). Approximately half of male and female victims said the resistance offered was moderate compared to one-third of the male aggressors.

Students were also asked how they (for victims) or how the other person (for aggressors) responded to the situation. Most female victims responded to the experience with passive resistance such as turning cold (57%), doing nothing (40%), and one third said that they use verbal (33%) or physical (34%) resistance during the experience. In almost all response categories, female victims rated a higher percentage of resistance than male victims. The exception to this pattern is the "Became Aroused" category in which 53% of the male victims and only 9% of the female victims responded affirmatively. This difference may be due to the different physiological responses of males and females and to the cultural expectation that men are to be ready for sex at any time regardless of the surrounding circumstances. It certainly shows that male victims in this sample experienced unwanted sex differently than females.

One-third of aggressors (36%) indicated that the victim used verbal resistance, one-quarter said the victim turned cold and none said the victim used physical resistance. While only 9% of female victims said they became aroused during the experience, two-thirds (67%) of the male aggressors perceived that the victim responded by becoming aroused. This difference in perception is an important one to study further. If men believe that their partners of unwanted sex become aroused even when the victims do not experience this, the misperception on the part of men may encourage them to continue initiating unwanted sexual experiences. The sexual double standard and sex scripts may shroud what is actually occurring in a sexual experience, allowing men to believe that

what they are doing is acceptable as long as the results are positive (i.e., the woman becomes aroused).

While caution must be used in interpreting these results because of the low number of male victims and male aggressors responding, this incongruence should be investigated further. It is impossible to determine if any matched pairs of victims and aggressors exist within the sample. Information gathered from known matched pairs would offer better information about the discrepancy in perceptions between victims and aggressors. It is interesting to note that many of the men in this study reported experiences that their female partner did not want and then went on to explain that the women became aroused. Thus, an "unwanted" sexual experience is transformed into a "wanted" sexual experience. Clearly, this is an area which requires further study.

#### Aggressor Reaction to Victim Response

Students were also asked how the aggressor responded to the victims' resistance. It is interesting to note that more female victims (36%) than male victims (20%) and male aggressors (16%) said that the aggressor stopped or became less aggressive. More male aggressors (33%) than female (15%) or male (13%) victims said that the aggressor became more aggressive. It is possible that male aggressors do not see their actions as negative or harmful and instead see becoming more aggressive as a positive thing.

#### Level of Aggression

Victims were asked how aggressive the other person was and aggressors were asked to rate how aggressive they were. Of all groups, male victims were more likely to rate the aggressors as highly aggressive. Male victims (one-half) were more likely than female victims (one-quarter) and male aggressors (one-quarter) to say that the aggressor was very aggressive. About half of the female victims and two-thirds of male

aggressors said that the aggressor was moderately aggressive compared to one-third of the male victims.

### Assignment of Responsibility

Students were also asked to rate how responsible they were and how responsible the other person was for the experience. While most (68%) female victims felt "somewhat" to "very" responsible, an equal number of male victims (68%) felt "little" or "no" responsibility. This difference may be attributed to the social roles assigned to men and women with regard to sex where women are taught to regulate the amount of sexual behaviour that occurs, while men are taught to be ready for sex at any time regardless of the circumstances. It is clear that, in this sample, victimized women assumed more responsibility for unwanted sex than victimized men. Female victims (87%) were more likely than male victims (65%) to say that the aggressor was "somewhat" to "very" responsible. Given the fact that most male victims' experiences occurred with women, it is not surprising that they would be less willing than female victims to hold their aggressor responsible for the experience.

About one-half of aggressors said they had "little" or "no" responsibility and two-thirds said that the victim had "little" or "no" responsibility for the experience. It is interesting that male aggressors saw themselves and the other person as not responsible for the experience. Still, one-half the aggressors said that they were "somewhat" to "very" responsible for the experience and one-third said that the other person was also "somewhat" to "very" responsible for the experience. It is possible that the men in this sample who answered as aggressors do not see their experiences as negative for either themselves or the other person involved and, thus, there is no need to assign responsibility for the experience.

### Post Experience Sexual Involvement

Victims were asked if they willingly engaged in sex with the aggressor after the unwanted sexual experience. The responses for both male and female victims were evenly divided between yes and no. Aggressors were asked if the other person willingly had sex with them after the incident. All but one male and one female said that the other person had sex with them after. While about one-half of all victimization experiences did not result in willing sex again with the other person, most aggressors reported that the other person engaged in willing sex again. Again, this difference in perceptions may be due to the difference in the victims' perceptions about themselves and the aggressors' perceptions about another person. It would be easy for the victims to identify that they did not willingly engage in sex again, but it would be more difficult for the aggressors to report on the intentions of the other person involved. It would be in the best interests of the aggressors to believe that the other person did willingly engage in sex with them again because it may remove any doubt that the experience was negative for the other person.

### Reporting Behaviour

More than half of the victims told their friends about the experience and most did not tell anyone else. Most aggressors did not tell anyone, including family, friends or others. Very few cases were reported to authorities, such as Campus Security, local police, local sexual assault centre, University faculty or residence personnel, suggesting that many of students' unwanted sexual experiences do remain hidden.

### Effect of Experience on Victims

Respondents were also asked to report on the consequences of their most serious victimization. While 85% of the female victims regretted their experience, only 30% of the male victims responded this way. Half of the female victims felt the experience was traumatic compared to only 7% of the male victims. Again, this is a good indication of the difference in male and female victim experiences with unwanted sex. Male victims may be less likely to define their experiences as negative because of the stigma attached to being a victim in our society today, or the experiences they reported may be quite different from female victims' experiences.

### Definition of Experience

When asked for their overall perception of the experience, most respondents said the experience was the result of a miscommunication. More than one-quarter (28%) of the female victims and none of the male victims or aggressors said that their experience was sexual assault. Similarly, 9% of the female victims and none of the male victims or aggressors said the experience could be labelled as rape. This difference in perceptions may be due to the reluctance of the male victims to define themselves as victims and having an experience that may be defined as sexual assault because of the negative perception of victims in our society. Another explanation is that the men who answered as victims may have been doing so to prove a point rather than because they truly saw themselves as victims of an unwanted sexual experience.

### Routing From Section C and E

Once students provided detailed information about their one most serious unwanted sexual experience while registered at the University of Alberta, they were asked to go to Section F.



## **Section F**

All participating students provided their opinions on 50 Likert scale statements covering a variety of topics. Many of the statements were taken from Burt's (1980) measure of sexual conservatism, adversarial sex roles, justification of force, rape supportive myths. Students were also asked if they thought the University of Alberta had a problem with sexual assault and if they thought the University of Alberta needed a Sexual Assault Centre. About one-half of the students (52%) said that they did not know if the University had a problem with sexual assault, one-quarter (23%) was uncertain, 11% disagreed, and 15% agreed. Women were more likely than men to agree that sexual assault was a problem on campus. Most students (84%) said that the University of Alberta should provide a sexual assault centre on campus. Women (90%) were also more likely than men (76%) to agree with this statement.

Section F concluded with an honesty assessment regarding answering the survey. Koss and Gidycz (1985) conducted a validity check on the Sexual Experiences Survey by interviewing males and females who had answered the self-administered questionnaire. She found that men were more likely than women to change their answers in the follow up interview. University of Alberta students were asked to agree or disagree with the following statements; a) "Most women would answer this questionnaire honestly", b) "Most men would answer this questionnaire honestly", and c) "I answered this questionnaire honestly". Results show that only 4.4% of the respondents believed that women would not answer the questionnaire honestly and 12% believed that men would not answer the questionnaire honestly. Less than 1% (.8%) of the respondents said that they did not answer honestly.

## **SUMMARY**

As a result of the 1991 study, the University of Alberta and the Students' Union responded by opening the University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre in the fall of 1993. Details from the study have also been used by the University to educate students about unwanted sex. While this work has been important in educating students, and in providing a service to students who have already experienced unwanted sex, further work remains to be done.

The data collected in 1991 offer some further interesting insights about students' experiences with unwanted sex. Very little analysis was conducted using the Likert statements, and further analysis of the detailed information provided by students about their most serious experience is also possible. The original study offered some interesting questions about the differences in female and male victims' experiences and between female victims' and male aggressors' experiences. It is possible to use the data to provide even more detailed information about students' experiences, and to reveal some of the connections between individual experiences and social attitudes. The following is an analysis of students' attitudes toward sexual assault and rape myths.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD SEXUAL ASSAULT AND RAPE MYTHS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The original University of Alberta study contained 50 Likert scale statements in Section F of the instrument. Many of the statements were adapted from Burt's (1980) study, which measured sexual conservatism, adversarial sex roles, acceptance of interpersonal violence, rape supportive attitudes. The purpose of this study was to determine how the stereotypical image of sexual assault and rape affected students' ability to determine what behaviours or actions constitute a crime rather than normative behaviour. In order to determine how this stereotypical image would affect their ability to define an incident as sexual assault or rape, it is first necessary to determine how closely students adhere to the stereotypical image. One way to measure this is to examine students' attitudes toward sexual assault and rape myths. If students accept the myths that surround sexual assault and rape, they would be less likely to define an unwanted sexual experience as a crime, and may be more likely to label these experiences as normative.

#### **STATEMENTS USED IN THE ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' ATTITUDES**

Of the 50 original likert scale statements in the University of Alberta study, 24 statements dealt specifically with issues relating to sexual assault and rape. Some of the 24 statements were taken from Burt's (1980) landmark study, and others were taken from the 1991 University of Alberta Student Help Training Manual, used to educate peer counsellors about sexual assault and rape myths. The 24 statements were divided into

four main categories, (a) seven statements regarding the sexual double standard and/or sex scripts, (b) six statements about force, (c) four statements about perpetrators, (d) and seven statements about victims. The categories were formed not to create a scale measure of sexual assault and rape myths but for ease of comparison of similar myths. It is important to note that the statements were taken from an instrument whose original purpose differed from the purpose of this thesis. As such, the four general categories of statements do not have an equal number of statements, nor do the statements in each category fully reflect all of the issues and myths associated with each category. The secondary nature of the data, and subsequent analysis, limits generalizability about the issue of sexual assault and rape. However, the statements do cover some important issues regarding sexual assault and rape not yet explored in previous work. In spite of the limits of this work, the statements reflect the attitudes of *this* sample of University of Alberta students.

*All* students responding to the questionnaire were asked to provide their opinion about these statements. The 24 statements are a relatively accurate measure of students' attitudes toward myths about sexual assault and rape. Table 3-1 lists the 24 statements, separated into the four main categories. A discussion of the measurement and each of the statements follows.

**Table 3-1  
Likert Scale Statements**

<b>Sexual Double Standard and Sexual Script Statements</b>	
V364	I believe that most men have a biologically stronger sex drive than most women.
V371	On average, women have the same needs for a sexual outlet as men.
V362	A woman who initiates a sexual encounter will probably have sex with nearly anybody.
V363	Women who have sex too readily with others are "loose."
V388	A woman who goes to the home or apartment of her date on their first date implies that she's willing to have sex.
V400	If a person changes their mind during sex and says "No," and their sex partner continues to have sex with them, a sexual assault has occurred.
V404	In a sexual situation, "No" always means "No."
<b>Myths About Force</b>	
V383	Being roughed up is sexually stimulating to most women.
V386	The only way to get a cold woman turned on is to use force.
V397	Because some people are reluctant to have sex for the first time with a person, it sometimes takes a bit of force to get your date to have sex with you for the first time.
V396	If a person engages in necking or petting, it is their own fault if their partner forces further sex involvement on them.
V384	Most women will pretend they don't want to have intercourse because they don't want to seem loose, but they're hoping the man will force them.
V403	In order to call a sexual situation "sexual assault," force must be used.
<b>Myths About the Perpetrator</b>	
V390	Someone who commits sexual assault is a sexually unfulfilled person who gets carried away by an uncontrollable urge.
V401	Most sexual assaults are committed by psychotic men.
V402	Most sexual assaults are attacks by strangers at night.
V395	You can't be sexually assaulted by someone you know.
<b>Myths About the Victim</b>	
V389	Only women can be sexually assaulted or raped; men can't be.
V393	In most sexual assaults, the person does something to provoke the attack by their dress or actions, eg. they dress provocatively, hitchhike, etc.
V394	In the majority of rapes, the "victim" is promiscuous or has a bad reputation.
V399	If "a person" gets drunk at a party and has sex with someone they just met there, "that person" is "fair game" to others at the party who want to have sex with "that person" too, whether "the person" wants to or not.
V398	Most "victims" secretly want to be raped.
V392	Any healthy person can successfully resist a rapist if they really want to.
V391	One reason that women falsely report a rape is that they frequently have a need to call attention to themselves.

Students responded to the 24 statements using a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Students were also able to respond "don't know," and, of course, they had the choice not to respond to the statements. Because responses to many of the statements were severely skewed (i.e., a large majority either agreed or disagreed), mean scores, rather than percentages agreeing to these statements, were used in the analysis. The statements were also standardized to reflect a real score on sexual assault or rape myth acceptance. In other words, low mean scores indicated a low acceptance of myths and higher mean scores indicated a higher acceptance of myths. For example, the statement "On average, women have the same needs for a sexual outlet as men" originally scored 5=strongly agree to 1=strongly disagree, was adjusted to score 5=strongly disagree and 1=strongly agree. The percentage of students agreeing or disagreeing did not change. In this case, a low mean score would indicate agreement that women have the same need as a sexual outlet as men, a belief contrary to the negative sexual stereotype of sexually active women. The following is a discussion of each of the 24 statements and their association to sexual assault and rape myths.

### **Sexual Double Standard and Sex Script Myths**

Recall that the sexual double standard relates to the image of sexually aggressive males and sexually passive females. The sexual double standard and sex script rely on actions or reputations rather than words to determine how a sexual situation will unfold. The first two statements in this category were V364, "I believe that most men have a biologically stronger sex drive than most women," and V371, "On average, most women have the same needs for a sexual outlet as men." These two statements focus on the difference between women's and men's sex drive. In order to reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape, students would disagree with the first statement and agree with the second statement about women. A higher mean score indicates a higher acceptance of the myths.

The next three statements deal with negative stereotypical images of sexually active women. The sexual double standard and sex scripts suggest that women's actions or reputations are more important than their words in determining whether or not they want to engage in sex. While these three statements could also be used to indicate victim-blaming myths, they were appropriate to measure the sexual double standard which favours a negative image of sexually active women. All three statements reflect beliefs that disregard a woman's right to have control over her own sexual behaviour. V362, "A woman who initiates a sexual encounter will probably have sex with nearly anybody," creates the image of a woman who is sexually available to anyone who wants to have sex with her regardless of her desires. The image suggests that if a woman is willing to have sex with nearly anybody she doesn't have the right to say no to a potential rapist. V363, "Women who have sex too readily with others are 'loose,'" also creates a negative image of a sexually active women, suggesting that the woman has forfeited her right to not engage in sex. V388, "A woman who goes to the home or apartment of her date on their first date implies that she is willing to have sex," relies on the woman's actions rather than her words to indicate her desire to engage in sex. In order to reject these negative images of women, students would disagree with each of these statements.

The last two statements in this category focus on the sexual double standard and sex scripts that allow men to disregard women's protests and to view the need to overcome resistance to sex as normative. These two statements, V400, "In a sexual situation, 'No' always means 'No,'" and V404, "If a person changes their mind during sex and says 'No,' and their sex partner continues to have sex with them, a sexual assault has occurred," indicate whether or not verbal statements are taken at face value in a sexual situation. In order to reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape, students would agree with both statements.

Students who score high on these statements may be more likely than students who score low to accept the sexual double standard and sex scripts and to condone

sexually aggressive experiences as normative.

### **Force Myths**

The next statements deal with the acceptable use of force to obtain sex. These statements were chosen for this category because they all contained the word "force." Again, some statements could also have been placed in the sexual double standard and sex scripts category but the specific reference to force qualified them for placement in this category. The first two statements, V383, "Being roughed up is sexually stimulating to most women," and V386, "The only way to get a cold woman turned on is to use force," focus on the myth that women enjoy being forced to have sex. The next two statements, V397, "Because some people are reluctant to have sex for the first time with a person, it sometimes takes a bit of force to get your date to have sex with you for the first time," and V396, "If a person engages in necking or petting, it is their own fault if their partner forces further sex involvement on them," dealt with the use of force to get a reluctant partner to have or to continue sex. The next statement, V384, "Most women will pretend they don't want to have intercourse because they don't want to seem loose, but they're hoping the man will force them," focuses specifically on women's reluctance to openly engage in sex. Again, this statement could have been placed in the sexual double standard category of myths but the specific focus on force also qualifies this statement for this section. Each of these statements reflect the normalization of the use of force to obtain sex, and the perpetuation sexual assault and rape. Students who disagree with all five of these statements would reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape.

The last statement in this category, "In order to call a sexual situation 'sexual assault,' force must be used," deals with students' reliance on the presence of force to define a sexual situation as sexual assault. The stereotypical image of sexual assault revolves around the use of force, which prevents people from identifying the other types of coercion as sexual assault. Students who agree with this statement would reject the



myth that force must be involved in order to call a sexual situation sexual assault. Students who score low on these statements would be more likely than students who score high to identify a wider range of coercive experiences as assault.

### **Perpetrator Myths**

The next category of statements focuses on myths about the perpetrator of sexual assault. The first statement, V390, "Someone who commits sexual assault is a sexually unfulfilled person who gets carried away by an uncontrollable urge," portrayed the image of a rapist as sexually unfulfilled and unable to control him/herself. The next two statements, V401, "Most sexual assaults are committed by psychotic men," and V402, "Most sexual assaults are attacks by strangers at night," also portrayed the stereotypical image of the perpetrator as psychotic, or as a stranger who attacks at night. The last statement, V395, "You can't be sexually assaulted by someone you know," was another measure of the stereotypical image of the perpetrator. All of these statements hide the reality that most sexual assaults occur with someone known to the victim, and within "normal" circumstances, involving "normal" people. In order to reject these myths about perpetrators, students would disagree with all four of these statements.

### **Victim Myths**

The last category of statements deal with myths about the victims. The first statement, V389, "Only women can be sexually assaulted or raped: Men can't be," is a myth that denies the sexual victimization of men. The next three statements deal with victim-blaming myths, which suggest that the victim was somehow responsible for the assault. V393, "In most sexual assaults, the person does something to provoke the attack by their dress or actions, eg. they dress provocatively, hitchhike, etc.," is a myth that blames the victim for the attack while excusing the perpetrator of any responsibility. V394, "In the majority of rapes, the 'victim' is promiscuous or has a bad reputation," and V399, "If a person gets drunk at a party and has sex with someone they just met

there, that person is fair game to others at the party who want to have sex with that person too, whether the person wants to or not," also blame the victims rather than the perpetrator. In all three statements, the victim is blamed for provoking the attack, which justifies sexual assault. The statement, V398, "Most 'victims' secretly want to be raped" suggests that a woman somehow invites the assault, and will enjoy the attack. This reduces the severity of situation and normalizes sexual assault as an enjoyable experience rather than a traumatic one. The next statement, "V392, "Any healthy person can successfully resist a rapist if they really wanted to," suggests that if a person is assaulted then it is their own fault for not preventing it or for not resisting enough. Again, this myth blames victims and removes the focus from the perpetrator. The next myth, "One reason that women falsely report a rape is that they frequently have a need to call attention to themselves," suggests that women falsely report rapes and as such are not to be believed when they do so. This discredits women's reports of rape and sexual assault. In order to reject these victim-blaming myths, students would disagree with all seven statements.

### **Missing Data**

Students responded to the statement using a Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, with a "don't know" response category, and students' may not have responded to some statements. While the response category, "don't know" was available to students, it was removed from the analysis of mean scores. Students who responded to this category were listed as missing data in the analysis. However, students' responses of "don't know" can offer some interesting information. Table 3-2 shows the response rates of females and males for each of the 24 statements.

**Table 3-2  
Response Rates for Statements by Sex**

Sexual Double Standard/Sex Scripts				Force			
Statement	Total	M	F	Statement	Total	M	F
V364	946	375	571	V383*	913	352	561
V371	918	359	559	V386	969	384	585
V362	966	382	584	V397	937	374	563
V363	963	382	581	V396	970	391	579
V388	970	386	584	V384	940	367	573
V400*	888	349	539	V403*	883	361	522
V404	952	381	571				
Perpetrator				Victim			
Statement	Total	M	F	Statement	Total	M	F
V390*	821	331	490	V389	968	393	575
V401*	817	318	499	V393	943	359	574
V402*	871	343	528	V394	918	358	560
V395	979	395	584	V399	954	383	571
				V398	962	384	578
				V392	952	377	575
				V391*	774	303	471

\* Indicates a missing response rate of more than 10% of the sample

Seven of the 24 statements in Table 3-2 show a missing response rate of more than 10% of the sample. It is interesting to note that three of these statements are in the perpetrator category, which has only four statements. Table 3-3 displays the seven statements with a missing response rate of ten percent or higher of the total sample.

**Table 3-3**  
**Missing Data by Response Categories DK /NR and Sex**

Statement	Total Missing N=1015	Total dk	Total nr	% of M n=415	% of F n=600
SDS/SS					
V400	13%	8%	5%	16%	10%
Force					
V383	10%	7%	3%	15%	7%
V403	13%	10%	3%	13%	13%
Perpetrator					
V390	19%	16%	3%	20%	18%
V401	20%	13%	7%	23%	17%
V402	14%	11%	3%	17%	12%
Victim					
V391	24%	20%	4%	27%	22%

The "Total Missing" column displays the percentage of missing responses for the total sample for each statement, and the next two columns show how the percentages are divided between the "don't know" (dk) and "no response" (nr) categories. It is particularly interesting that of the seven statements with a relatively high missing response rate (> 10%), three belong to the perpetrator category. It is difficult to tell what makes these statements harder to respond to than the others. A comparison of the "Total dk" and "Total nr" columns shows that most missing responses are due to "don't know" rather than "no response." Of particular interest in this comparison is V400, V383 and V401, which show almost one-third of missing data due to non-responses. The last two columns in Table 3-3 show the total missing responses by gender.

These data reflect the percentage of males and females rather than the total population. A comparison of male and female missing responses shows that males have a higher missing response rate than females on all but one statement (V403). In particular, males were substantially more likely than females to have missing responses

to the following statements, V400, "In a sexual situation, 'No' always means 'No,'" V383, "Being roughed up is sexually stimulating to most women," V401, "Most sexual assaults are by psychotic men," V402, "Most sexual assaults are by strangers at night," and V391, "One reason that women falsely report rape is that they frequently have a need to call attention to themselves."

It is possible that males are more reluctant than females to respond to the statements because males are more likely than females to be sexually aggressive. Of all the statements, V391, "One reason that women falsely report rape is that they frequently have a need to call attention to themselves," shows the highest missing response rate (24%), with almost one-quarter of students missing. Most students (20%) responded to this statement with "don't know." Students' difficulty answering this question may indicate one of the areas that requires further research. The high missing response to this statement may indicate that this myth is particularly troublesome. In summary, most missing data was due to "don't know" responses rather than non responses, and male were more likely than females to have missing responses.

## **UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA STUDENTS' ATTITUDES**

Students' mean scores for each statement were evaluated to determine at what level University of Alberta students accept or reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape. Table 3-4 shows the mean scores, rounded off to the nearest decimal point, for each statement.

**Table 3-4  
Students' Mean Scores for Each Statement**

Statement	Mean	Statement	Mean
SDS/SS		Perpetrator	
V364	3.0	V390	2.4
V371	2.1	V401	2.1
V362	1.8	V402	1.9
V363	3.0	V395	1.3
V388	1.7		
V400	1.9		
V404	1.9		
Force		Victim	
V383	1.5	V389	1.6
V386	1.2	V393	1.7
V397	1.5	V394	1.5
V396	1.5	V399	1.3
V384	1.6	V398	1.2
V403	2.5	V392	1.5
		V391	2.3

Recall that students were able to respond to each statement using a five-point Likert scale. Also recall that the scores were standardized to represent an actual score of acceptance or rejection of the myths represented by each statement. The lower scores reflect a stronger rejection of the myths and higher scores represent a stronger acceptance of the myths. In looking at the mean scores for each statement it is clear that students reject some myths more strongly than others. It is also clear that students had a wide range of opinions on these issues, as indicated by the range of scores from a low of 1.2 to a high of 3.0.

If the five-point scale were divided in half, with 2.5 as the cut point, and all scores falling below this point were considered low, and all numbers above considered high, it would be clear that, as a whole, University of Alberta students scored low on

most of the statements. This suggests that University of Alberta students tended to reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape. However, some scores fell into the high acceptance category.

Three statements scored 2.5 or above, V364, "I believe that most men have a biologically stronger sex drive than most women," V363, "Women who have sex too readily with others are 'loose,'" and V403, "In order to call a sexual situation "sexual assault," force must be used." As a whole students were more likely to accept these three myths than any other myths presented in this study. The relatively high acceptance of these myths suggests that these students accepted the sexual double standard about men's sex drive as stronger than women's, had a negative opinion about sexually active women, and relied on force to define a situation as sexual assault. In particular, the last statement may indicate that this population would be willing to identify only a narrow range of coercive sexual behaviour as sexual assault. The students in this sample may use men's strong sex drive as an excuse for sexually aggressive behaviour, and their negative opinion about sexually active women may prevent them from identifying these types of women as victims when they are assaulted.

It is clear by the varying mean scores that students had a wide range of opinions with regard to these rape-supportive myths. If the remaining 21 statements were divided into three groups, those with extremely low scores (1.0 to 1.5), those with very low scores (1.6 to 2.0), and those with moderately low scores (2.1 to 2.5), it becomes clearer how the students' opinions varied according to the statements. Of the remaining 21 statements, nine statements showed extremely low means, and most of these were found in the categories regarding force and victims. This suggests that students were more likely to reject the myths about force and victims than they were to reject myths about the sexual double standard and the perpetrator. Eight statements showed very low mean scores, and four statements showed moderately low scores. Most of the statements (17 of 24) fell within the extremely and very low scores, with the remaining scores (7) within the moderately low to high scores. Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that these students

strongly rejected many of the myths associated with sexual assault and rape. It is interesting to note, however, how the scores were distributed among the four categories of statements.

### **Victim Myths**

Of all the categories, statements involving victims showed the overall lowest scores. Statements about victims showed mean scores in the extremely and very low ranges for six of the seven statements, suggesting that this population of students tended to reject these myths more strongly than myths in any other category in this study.

In particular, students were most likely to reject two myths in this section, V399 (1.2), "If a person gets drunk at a party and has sex with someone they just met there, that person is "fair game" to others at the party who want to have sex with that person too, whether the person wants to or not," and V398, (1.3), "Most victims secretly want to be raped." This suggests that, in general, students in this sample would not tolerate gang rape situations nor would they believe that victims want to be attacked.

While students strongly rejected the above two myths about victims, they were slightly more willing to reject the myths that, V394, (1.5) "In the majority of rapes, the victim is unconscious or has a bad reputation," and V392, (1.5) "Any healthy person can successfully resist a rapist if they really want to." While students strongly rejected that victims want to be attacked, they were slightly more willing to accept that something about the victims, such as having a bad reputation or not resisting enough, cause them to be assaulted. The slightly higher score on V393 (1.7), "In most sexual assaults, the person does something to provoke the attack by their dress or actions, eg. they dress provocatively, hitchhike, etc.," also suggests that students were slightly more willing to accept that victims provoke their attacks. Again, while students rejected the overt myth that victims want to be attacked, they were less likely to reject the less overt forms of victim blaming, suggesting that this sample of students might blame the victim for the



assault if they perceive that the victim has a bad reputation or has somehow provoked the attack. These results suggest that victim-blaming myths are insidious. While students would not overtly accept that victims want to be attacked they might assign blame to the victim in certain cases.

One other statement in this section showed a very low score, V389 (1.6), "Only women can be sexually assaulted or raped: men can't be." While students were willing to reject other myths about victims, they were less willing to reject this myth, suggesting that they may hold the stereotypical image of sexual assault involving a male aggressor and female victim. The slightly lower rejection of this myth suggests that students might be less willing to accept and believe male victims. Also, males might be less likely to identify potentially dangerous situations.

V391, "One reason that women falsely report a rape is that they frequently have a need to call attention to themselves," showed the highest score for this section (2.3). This higher score suggests that while students were quick to reject other myths about victims, they were less likely to reject this myth. While students believed that victims do not want to be attacked, they were less certain that women falsely report rape to call attention to themselves. The higher score for this statement suggests that students might not believe victims who report their attacks to the police.

Overall, students strongly rejected the most overt statements about victimization, such as situations involving gang rape or the belief that victims want to be attacked. However, students were less likely to reject less overt myths about victims, such as believing that they somehow provoked the attack, or didn't resist enough, or that they falsely report rapes. These findings suggest that while it appears that, in general, students rejected victim-blaming as shown by the overall low scores, some myths appear more insidious than others, as shown by the range of scores. It appears that women's reluctance to report sexual assault and rape may be based on the reality that they may not be believed, and they may be blamed for provoking or for not preventing the assault.

## Force Myths

The statements about force showed the next highest overall mean scores. Four of the six statements about force showed extremely low scores suggesting that students rejected these myths quite strongly. In particular, V386, "The only way to get a cold woman turned on is to use force," rated the lowest mean score of all statements (1.2), suggesting that students strongly rejected the use of force as a method of sexual "persuasion."

The next three myths showing an extremely low score in this section all rated a mean score of 1.5, suggesting that students were less likely to reject these myths about force compared to V386. Students were slightly more willing to accept that, V383, "Being roughed up is sexually stimulating to most women." While students rejected the use of force to turn on a cold woman, they were less likely to reject the myth that women enjoy rough sex. This suggests that while students rejected the more overt statement about the use of force to turn on a cold woman, they were slightly more accepting of the less overt statement about women enjoying rough sex. Students were also slightly more willing to accept V397, "Because some people are reluctant to have sex for the first time with a person, it sometimes takes a bit of force to get your date to have sex with you for the first time," and V396, "If a person engages in necking or petting, it is their own fault if their partner forces further sex involvement on them." It appears that while students did not approve of forced sex to turn on a cold woman, they were less willing to reject the use of force to obtain sex for the first time or to push sex beyond a certain level. These results suggest that these students might be willing to condone the use of force to obtain sex if the circumstances match those indicated in these statements.

One statement scored slightly higher, V384 (1.6), suggesting that students were slightly more willing to accept that, "Most women will pretend they don't want to have intercourse because they don't want to seem loose, but they're hoping the man will force

them." Again, when the context of the use of force was less overt, the level of acceptance for this type of behaviour increased. Only one statement in this section showed a high score, V403 (2.5), "In order to call a sexual situation 'sexual assault,' force must be used." This high score suggests that students were quite a bit less likely to reject this myth about force than any of the others.

Overall, the results from this category of statements suggest that students rejected many myths about the use of force, as indicated by the low scores. However, the range of scores suggest that while students strongly rejected the overt use of force, they appeared to be slightly more tolerant of less overt situations involving force. Students might be more tolerant of the use of force to "persuade" a partner to have sex for the first time or to push a sexual situation beyond necking or petting. What is most interesting is that while students might be slightly tolerant of the use of force in certain situations, they were more likely to rely on the presence of force to define a situation as sexual assault. If students tolerate the use of force in certain situations, they might be less likely to identify these situations as sexual assault. Since most incidents of sexual assault do not involve overt force, students might not identify most sexual assault experiences as such.

These results suggest that most sexual assaults would not be identified by University of Alberta students. Their reliance on the presence of force to define a situation as sexual assault suggests that they adhered to the stereotypical notion of sexual assault, which hides most forms of this crime. It appears that while students strongly rejected overt situations of force, the less overt forms may be more insidious because they were not rejected as strongly.

## **Perpetrator Myths**

In comparison to the previous two categories of statements, statements about the perpetrator scored overall higher mean scores, suggesting that students were less likely to reject myths about the perpetrators than they were to reject myths about victims and force. While many statements about force and victims rated extremely low mean scores, only one myth in this section rated as such, V395 (1.3), "You can't be sexually assaulted by someone you know." This statement rated much lower than the other myths in this section, suggesting that students accepted that sexual assault and rape can occur with someone the victim knows. However, students were less likely to reject other myths about the perpetrator.

V402, (1.9), "Most sexual assaults are attacks by strangers at night," rated a higher mean score, suggesting that students were less likely to reject this myth than the myth that you can't be assaulted by someone you know. While students accepted that sexual assault occurs between people who know each other, they were more likely to accept that most sexual assaults occur with strangers at night. This suggests that students did accept the stereotypical image of a perpetrator. The next two statements also reflected the stereotypical image of the rapist, and both showed higher mean scores than V402. V401 (2.1), "Most sexual assaults are committed by psychotic men," and V390 (2.4), "Someone who commits sexual assault is a sexually unfulfilled person who gets carried away by an uncontrollable urge," showed the highest scores for statements about perpetrators, suggesting that students were more likely to accept these myths than the other myths about perpetrators.

While students accepted that sexual assaults can occur with people the victim knows, they were less likely to reject the myths that perpetuate the stereotypical image of a perpetrator, as a stranger who attacks at night, as a psychotic man, and as a sexually unfulfilled person who has uncontrollable urges. This stereotypical image of a perpetrator as deviant hides the reality that most assaults occur with "ordinary" people

in "ordinary" circumstances. These results suggest that students might be less able to identify most experiences of sexual assault given their perception of the attacker as deviant. The low rejection of these stereotypical images of the perpetrator suggests that students might be less likely to identify as crimes sexual assaults that occur within the context of "ordinary" situations.

### **Sexual Double Standard and Sex Script Myths**

It is interesting to note that statements regarding the sexual double standard and sex scripts showed the overall highest mean scores of all the categories in this study. No statements in this section received a score of extremely low, and two statements showed high scores, suggesting that students were less likely to reject the myths about the sexual double standard and sex scripts than any other myths in this study.

The first two myths in this category dealt with the sexual needs of women and men. Of all the myths in the study, students scored highest on the myth, V364 (3.0), "I believe that most men have a biologically stronger sex drive than most women," suggesting that students are less likely to reject this myth than all other myths in the study. The lower mean score on V371 (2.1), "On average, women have the same needs for a sexual outlet as men," revealed that this sample of students were relatively willing to accept sexual equality for women and men. However, the higher score on V364 compared to V371 suggests that this population was more willing to accept men's sexual drive as stronger than women's than they were to accept women's sexual needs as equal to men's. This finding reveals the existence of the sexual double standard regarding women's and men's sexual needs. Students believed that women have equal sexual needs compared to men, but they also believed that men have a biologically stronger sex drive than women. The high score on V364 (3.0) suggests that students might be willing to condone the actions of sexually aggressive men as normative. This myth may excuse men from being responsible for their sexual behaviour.

The other statement in this category that revealed a high score also deals with women's sexuality. While students appeared to accept women's sexual needs as equal to men's, they also showed a high score for V363 (3.0), "Women who have sex too readily with others are 'loose.'" It appears that while students were ready to accept women's sexual equality, they appeared judgemental about sexually active women. It is impossible to determine from this data what "too readily" means. However, given the sexual double standard that requires women to regulate sexual interactions between women and men, this statement reveals that women may be at a disadvantage in sexual situations. If they have sex too readily they may be labelled "loose". It appears that this sample of students accepted the sexual double standard that puts women at a sexual disadvantage.

The remaining four statements in this category showed lower mean scores suggesting that students were less willing to accept these myths than the ones just discussed. Two statements dealt specifically with women's behaviour as an indicator of their willingness to engage in sex. These two statements could have been placed in the victim category but since they rely on women's behaviour rather than overt communication to indicate a willingness to have sex, they relate to the sexual scripts that dictate how a sexual situation will unfold. V362 (1.8), "A woman who initiates a sexual encounter will probably have sex with nearly anybody," and V388 (1.7), "A woman who goes to the home or apartment of her date on their first date implies that she's willing to have sex," both revealed much lower scores than the other myths discussed in this category. It is interesting to note that the means for these two statements were lower than the other two statements about sex and women. Recall that the statement about women's need for a sexual outlet was similar to men's rated a mean score of 2.1, indicating that students were relatively accepting of women's sexual equality. Also recall that students scored high (3.0) on the statement that women who have sex too readily are loose, suggesting that students were less accepting of sexually active women. Notice that the mean scores for V362 (1.8) and V388 (1.7) were substantially lower than both of the previous statements, suggesting that students were more likely to reject these myths about

sexually active women than the other two statements. It appears that while students might have a negative image about sexually active women, they may not accept that behaviour alone is enough to imply a willingness to have sex.

The last two statements in this category also rated very low scores, but the means were slightly higher than V362 and V388. Both statements dealt with the use of the word "No" in a sexual situation and in both, low scores indicated an agreement with these statements. V400, "If a person changes their mind during sex and says 'No,' and their sex partner continues to have sex with them, a sexual assault has occurred," and V404, "In a sexual situation, 'No' always means 'No,'" both showed very low scores of 1.9. The similarity in scores between the two statements reveals that students were equally likely to agree with V404 as they are to agree with V400. While the low score suggests that students accepted these two statements, the higher mean scores on these two statements compared to many other myths in this study suggest that, on average, students were less likely to accept "No" at face value in a sexual situation.

It is also interesting to note that the mean scores in this section were higher than almost all of the mean scores for the victims and force categories, suggesting that students were less likely to reject the myths that pertain to the sexual double standard and sex scripts. In particular, students did not strongly reject the sexual double standard that men's biological sex drive is stronger than women's and that women who have sex too readily are loose. It appears that the students in this sample were relatively accepting of women's sexual equality but they were more accepting of men's stronger biological sex drive. The combination of these statements suggest that women are at a sexual disadvantage. Students were more likely reject the sexual double standard and sex scripts that suggest a woman's actions indicate consent to sex (V362 & V388), however, the higher mean scores for these statements compared to many other statements in the study suggest that students were less likely to reject these myths than other myths about victims and force. Also, the higher mean scores for the statements regarding the use of "No" in a sexual situation, suggest that students were less likely to accept "No" at face value

in a sexual situation than they were to reject other myths about victims and force. This is particularly problematic since the sexual double standard dictates that women are responsible for regulating sexual behaviour, and are more likely than men to use the word "No" in a sexual situation. These results suggest that while students tended to reject the sexual double standard as seen by the overall low scores, they were less likely to reject these myths than many other myths regarding sexual assault and rape. Since the sexual double standard tends to disadvantage women in a sexual situation, it would appear that women at the University of Alberta may be at a sexual disadvantage since students were less likely to reject these myths than many other myths.

### **Summary**

Overall, students rated relatively low mean scores on the 24 statements in this study, suggesting that, on average, University of Alberta students rejected the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape. However, the wide range of scores indicate that students were more likely to reject some myths more than others, and the relatively high scores on three statements suggest that students were more likely to accept these myths than others.

In particular, students were more likely to reject myths about victims and force than they were to reject myths about the sexual double standard and sex scripts and about the perpetrator. In general, students were more likely to reject overt statements than they were to reject less overt statements about victims and force. Of particular interest are the relatively high mean scores on several statements. Students were less likely to reject the sexual double standard that suggests that women who have sex too readily are loose and that men have a biologically stronger sex drive than women. They were also less likely to reject the belief that in order to call a sexual situation sexual assault, force must be used, that men who commit sexual assault are sexually unfulfilled and are carried away by uncontrollable urges, and that women falsely report rape to call attention to themselves. The relatively high mean scores for these five statements compared to the



other 19 statements in this study suggest that the stereotypical image of sexual assault and rape had a foothold among this sample of University of Alberta students. In particular, students were less likely to reject the myths about the perpetrator compared to many other myths in this study, suggesting that they were slightly more likely to accept the perpetrator as a deviant stranger than they were to accept the myths about victims. While students most strongly rejected many myths about victims, there was a range of rejection regarding victim-blaming myths. In particular, the myth that suggests that women falsely report rape to call attention to themselves was less rejected than all other myths about victims, suggesting that victims may not be believed when they do report an attack.

Taken as a whole, University of Alberta students rejected the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape, however, the lower rejection of certain myths suggests that the stereotypical image of sexual assault and rape existed among this sample of students. In particular, myths about the sexual double standard and sex scripts, and the perpetrator were least rejected, while myths about victims and force were most rejected. Since the majority of victims in this study were women and the majority of perpetrators were men, it is important to determine if gender differences exist in students' attitudes toward sexual assault and rape. One would expect females to be more likely than males to reject the myths since females are more likely than males to experience unwanted sex.

## **GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDES**

Previous research suggests that males are more likely than females to accept the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape. In order to determine if that pattern is true for University of Alberta students, the means scores of all males (n=415) and all females (n=600) were compared for each of the 24 statements. The analysis involved a comparison of means and an analysis of variance to determine significance. The analysis was conducted on each separate statement because of the varying response rates for each statement. Results are shown in Table 3-5.

**Table 3-5**  
**Students' Attitudes by Sex**

Variable	Females n=600	Males n=415	Sig.	Difference
<b>SDS/SS**</b>				
V364	2.9	3.2	.001	.3
V371	2.0	2.2	.001	.2
V362	1.7	2.1	.000	.4
V363	2.9	3.1	.007	.2
V388	1.6	1.9	.000	.3
V400	1.8	2.2	.000	.4
V404	1.7	2.3	.000	.6
<b>Force</b>				
V383	1.4	1.7	.000	.3
V386	1.1	1.3	.000	.2
V397	1.3	1.7	.000	.4
V396	1.4	1.7	.000	.3
V384	1.4	1.9	.000	.5
V403	2.4	2.7	.001	.3
<b>Perpetrator</b>				
V390	2.2	2.7	.000	.5
V401	2.0	2.1	.124	.1
V402	1.8	2.0	.000	.2
V395	1.2	1.4	.000	.2
<b>Victim</b>				
V389	1.5	1.7	.017	.2
V393	1.5	2.1	.000	.6
V394	1.4	1.8	.000	.4
V399	1.2	1.4	.000	.2
V398	1.1	1.2	.000	.1
V392	1.4	1.7	.000	.3
V391	2.2	2.5	.000	.3

\* Mean Difference= difference between female and male means    \*\* SDS/SS = Sexual Double Standard and Sex Scripts

Table 3-5 shows the mean scores for females and males, the significance level, and the difference between female and male mean scores. Recall that the mean scores have been standardized so that a low score reflects a low acceptance of the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape.

### **Overall Differences in Male and Female Attitudes**

Recall that for all statements, students rated relatively low mean scores indicating that, on average, this population of students did not accept the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape. However, there were significant differences between male and female scores on 23 of 24 variables, with men rating consistently higher mean scores than females. These results suggest that men were less likely than women to reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape, a finding consistent with the literature. Only one statement, V401 "Most sexual assaults are committed by psychotic men," did not show a significantly different mean score between females and males.

In addition to the significant differences, column five shows the difference between female and male mean scores. This column reveals a wide range of mean differences, ranging from .1 on V398 to .6 on V393 and V404 (not including V401, which is not significant). This range of differences suggests that females and males held somewhat similar opinions on some statements, as shown by the low difference in means, and very different opinions on other statements, as shown by the higher difference in mean scores. No apparent pattern exists among the four categories with regard to mean differences, high and low mean differences were found in each category. However, myths about the perpetrator show three of four statements with very low mean differences (.1 and .2), suggesting that females and males held more similar opinions about perpetrator myths than other myths related to sexual assault. It is difficult to conclude this with any certainty since there are fewer statements in the perpetrator

category than other categories. The following is a discussion of the mean differences ranging from the smallest differences to the largest.

As discussed, V401, "Most sexual assaults are committed by psychotic men" showed no significant difference between males and females. Students scored only a moderately low mean (rather than extremely or very low) on this statement (males 2.1 and females 2.0) suggesting that they were less likely to reject this myth than many others in the study. Only one other statement showed mean difference of .1 between females and males, V398, "Most 'victims' secretly want to be raped." The overall extremely low score on this statement (1.1 females and 1.2 males) suggests that both females and males strongly rejected this myth about sexual assault.

### **Mean Differences of .2**

One-quarter of all the statements (seven) showed a low mean difference of .2, and these are fairly evenly distributed between the four categories of statements. In all cases, again, females were more likely than males to reject these myths but the relatively low difference in means suggests that the difference in opinions is not as strong as for most other statements in this study.

Females were slightly more likely than males to agree that V371, "On average women have the same needs for a sexual outlet as men," and to disagree that V363, "Women who have sex too readily with others are loose," which pertain to the sexual double standard and sex scripts. It is interesting to note that while both females and males held similar opinions about women's sexual needs as similar to men's, both genders were less accepting of sexually active women who have sex "too readily." It appears that this sexual double standard is equally strong for women and men.

Only one statement in the force category showed a .2 mean difference, and this was the lowest score in that category. Females were slightly more likely than males to

disagree with "V386, "The only way to get a cold woman turned on is to use force," suggesting that men were slightly more accepting of this strategy than females. This difference makes sense given that women are more likely than men to be on the receiving end of a forced sex situation.

It is interesting to note that two of the four statements in the perpetrator category showed a mean difference of .2, V402, "Most sexual assaults are attacks by strangers at night," and V395, "You can't be sexually assaulted by someone you know," especially since one of the four statements in this category showed no significant difference in mean scores. It is possible that females and males held relatively similar opinions about perpetrators, with females being slightly more likely than males to reject these myths. Both females and males were more likely to reject the myth V395 (1.2 females and 1.4 males) than the myth V401 (1.8 females and 2.0 males), suggesting that students were aware that it is possible to be attacked by someone known to the victim, but it appears that students were also more likely to believe that rapists are deviant strangers who attack at night.

Students also held relatively similar opinions on two statements in the victim category, V389, "Only women can be sexually assaulted or raped: men can't be," and V399, "If a person gets drunk at a party and has sex with someone they just met there, that person is fair game to others at the party who want to have sex with that person too, whether or not the person wants to." Both females and males were more likely to reject the myth, V399 (1.2 females and 1.4 males) than they were to reject the myth V389 (1.5 females and 1.7 males), suggesting that they strongly disapproved of a gang rape situation but they were less likely to reject the myth about both men and women as possible victims of sexual assault and rape. It is clear, however, that females were slightly more likely than males to reject these myths, suggesting that females might be less tolerant than males of gang rape situations and more likely to accept males as victims.

### **Mean Differences of .3**

One-quarter of the statements (seven) revealed a difference of .3 between female and male mean scores, suggesting that females and males held more different opinions about these statements than the seven statements just discussed. Again, females were more likely than males to reject the myths associated with these statements, suggesting that females are less tolerant than males of these sexual assault and rape myths. It is interesting to note that three of the .3 difference statements were found in the force category and none were found in the perpetrator category, the remaining four statements with a .3 difference were divided evenly between the SDS/SS and victim category.

Females were more likely than males to disagree that males have a stronger biological sex drive than women (V364), and to disagree that a woman who goes to the home of her date on the first date implies she's willing to have sex (V388), a difference that could contribute to sexual assault. While both females (1.6) and males (1.9) scored very low means for V388, the difference in opinions suggests that men may be more likely than women to attribute sexual meanings to women's actions, a difference that could lead to sexual assault. It is also interesting to note, that both females (2.9) and males (3.2) scored relatively high means for V364 about men's sex drive as stronger than women's, with men's score being the highest for all statements. Women were less likely than men to reject this myth and men rejected this myth less than all other myths in this study. If men believe that they have a stronger sex drive than women, they may use this belief to justify their sexually coercive behaviour.

Three of the statements in the perpetrator category showed .3 difference in mean scores between females and males. V383, "Being roughed up is sexually stimulating to women," and V396, "If a person engages in necking or petting, it is their own fault if their partner forces further sexual involvement on them," showed similar mean scores for females (1.4) and males (1.7), suggesting that females were more likely than males to disagree with both these statements. This finding suggests that males were more likely

than females to condone rough sex with women and to assume that necking and petting infers consent to further sex. Again, this difference in means may contribute to the miscommunication between women and men in a sexual situation. Women, who are charged with regulating sexual behaviour, may engage in necking and petting with no intention to continue but men may interpret this behaviour to imply a willingness to go further. The gender difference in opinions about women enjoying rough sex may allow men to justify their sexually coercive behaviour. Women were more likely than men to reject this myth, and this may be attributed to the fact that women are more likely than men to experience rough sex.

It is interesting to note that males and females also scored a .3 difference on V403, "In order to call a sexual situation sexual assault, force must be used." It is also interesting to note that when this statement is divided into mean scores for females and males, the females' score falls into the moderately low category, while the males' score falls into the high category (above or below 2.5). The relatively high mean scores for both women and men on this statement suggest that both women and men were less likely to reject this myth compared to many other myths in this study. In spite of the high scores, females were more likely than males to disagree with this statement, suggesting that females may be more likely than males to identify certain non-forced sexual situations as sexual assault. It appears that males in this sample had a narrower definition of sexual assault than females, since men were more likely than women to believe that sexual assault must involve force. This difference is quite important since females may identify certain situations as sexual assault, while men may not identify the same situation as such. This difference in perceptions could create a problem for men who assume that their actions are normative, while their female partners identify these same actions as a criminal act. Overall, it appears that females were less tolerant than males of the use of force in sexual situations, which is not surprising since women are more likely than men to be the victims of forced or coerced sex.

The last two statements revealing a .3 difference between women and men were found in the victim category, V392, "Any healthy person can resist rapist if they really want to," and V391, "One reason that women falsely report a rape is that they frequently have a need to call attention to themselves." Both females and males were more likely to reject V392 (1.4 females and 1.7 males) than V391 (2.2 females and 2.5 males), which suggests that they were more accepting of a victim's inability to resist rape than they were of a woman falsely reporting rape. However, women were more likely than men to reject these two myths, which suggests that women in this sample may have more empathy with a rape victim than do men in the sample. This difference in mean scores between men and women may also indicate that men may be more likely than women to blame victims for their attacks and to disbelieve women who report rape.

#### **Mean Differences of .4**

Only four statements showed a difference of .4 between female and male mean scores, suggesting that males and females had stronger differences of opinion for these four statements than the other statements previously discussed. Two of the statements were in the SDS/SS category, V362, "A woman who initiates sex will probably have sex with nearly anybody," and V400, "If a person changes their mind during sex and says 'No,' and their sex partner continues to have sex with them, a sexual assault has occurred." The mean scores were relatively close for the two statements (females scored 1.7 on V362 and 1.8 on V400, males scored 2.1 on V362 and 2.2 on V400), but the mean difference between females and males showed that women were more likely than men to disagree with V362 and to agree with V400. The difference in means suggests that men may be more willing than women to believe that a woman's reputation implies consent and less willing than women to identify certain situations as sexual assault. It appears that men may be less willing than women to accept "No" at face value, a situation that puts women at a disadvantage in a sexual situation. Women have traditionally been responsible for regulating sexual behaviour, and part of this regulation may involve verbal protestations.



These findings indicate a clear difference between women's and men's perceptions about the meaning of "No" in a sexual situation. Men may accept the use of the word "No" as a normative and expected part of a sexual situation, which they are to ignore. Women, on the other hand, may rely on "No" to indicate their unwillingness to participate or continue in a sexual situation. The difference in opinions about this statement suggests that women may be more willing to identify such situations as sexual assault, while men may continue to accept them as normative, a difference that is dangerous to both women and men. Women are at risk of not being believed when they use the word "No" in a sexual situation, and men are at risk of being charged with a crime when they continue to have sex after their partner has said "No." It is clear that this sexual double standard contributes to the miscommunication between women and men in sexual situations.

Women and men also held a stronger difference of opinion (.4) with regard to V397, "Because some people are reluctant to have sex for the first time with a person, it sometimes takes a bit of force to get your date to have sex with you for the first time. Females scored lower (1.3) than males (1.7) suggesting that men were more tolerant than women of the use of force in a first-sex situation. This difference of opinion is not surprising given that women are more likely than men to experience forced sex. Given the previous discussion that men were less likely to take "No" at face value, this difference of opinions reflects the possibility of a miscommunication and/or crime between women and men. Men may see forced sex as normative while women may be less tolerant of this behaviour. This difference in opinions may also reveal very different expectations of women and men in a first-sex experience, women may expect romance and love, while men may be willing to use a certain level of force to "persuade" a reluctant partner to have sex for the first time.

Females and males also showed a .4 difference for the statement V394, "In the majority of rapes, the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation." This myth was not as strongly rejected as some other myths in this category, as shown by the 1.4

(females ) and 1.8 (males) scores, but reflects a similar level of acceptance as the previous statement, V397. The difference between female and male scores suggests that males may be more likely than females to blame the victim for the assault and to condone sexually coercive behaviour with certain women. It is possible that sexually coercive males may use this myth to justify their behaviour, and this will be examined later in this paper. It is clear, however, that women and men had clear differences of opinion about these four statements.

### **Mean Differences of .5**

Two statements revealed a mean difference of .5 between female and male scores, suggesting that men and women had fairly strong differences of opinion regarding these statements. V384, "Most women will pretend they don't want to have intercourse because they don't want to seem loose, but they're hoping the man will force them" revealed lower mean scores (females 1.4 and males 1.9) than V390, "Someone who commits a sexual assault is a sexually unfulfilled person who gets carried away by an uncontrollable urge," (females 2.2 and males 2.7). This difference in statement means suggests that students were much more likely to reject the force myth (V384) than the perpetrator myth (V390). However, the mean differences between females and males reveals that women were substantially more likely than males to reject V390 and V384.

Men were more likely than women to believe that women pretend not to want intercourse hoping the man will force them, a difference that could put women at a sexual disadvantage. Men may believe that women's resistance to sex is only token rather than real, a situation that could easily lead to sexual assault, especially since men appear more tolerant of forced sex than women.

Females (2.2) were significantly and substantially more likely than males (2.7) to disagree that perpetrators are sexually unfulfilled men who cannot control themselves, suggesting that females were more likely than males to reject this myth. It is also

interesting to note that males scored a substantially higher mean on this statement than on any other statement in this section, suggesting that men were less likely to reject this myth about perpetrators than any of the other myths. Thus, females were more likely than males to believe that sexual assaulters can be quite ordinary people rather than deviant and sexually uncontrolled men. Males were more likely to accept this image of sexual assaulters as sexually uncontrolled than any of the other myths about perpetrators. It is possible that men may accept this myth more readily than the others because it allows them to distinguish their own sexual behaviour from that of someone they would label as a rapist. Women may be more likely than men reject this stereotypical image of a rapist since they are more at risk of encountering a sexual assault than men.

### **Mean Differences of .6**

Two statements showed the most discrepancy between female and male mean scores with .6 difference. V393, "In most sexual assaults, the person does something to provoke the attack by their dress or actions, eg. they dress provocatively, hitchhike, etc," revealed overall lower means (females 1.5 and males 2.1) than V404, "In a sexual situation, 'No' always means 'No,'" (females 1.7 and males 2.3), suggesting that students were more likely to disagree with V393 than they were to agree with V404.

Females were substantially more likely than males to disagree that sexual assault victims provoke their attacks, which is not surprising since females are more likely than males to experience sexual assault. This finding suggests that males may be more likely than females to blame the victim for the assault. Men were also less likely than women to accept "No" at face value in a sexual situation while women were more willing than men to accept that "No" always means "No" in a sexual situation, and this difference may lead to serious misunderstandings in a sexual situation. It also puts women at a sexual disadvantage since women have traditionally been responsible for regulating sex. Men may believe that "No" is offered as a token resistance, while women may be more willing to accept that "No" really means "No." It is clear that this sexual double

standard is stronger for men than it is for women, yet women are at greater risk because of it. Of course, the difference in opinions on this statement may also reflect the controversy over the "No means No" campaigns at other Canadian Universities. It is clear that this is an area that requires further investigation and certainly further education.

## **Summary**

Overall, men were significantly less likely than women to reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape, a finding consistent with the literature. Women scored less than 2.1 on 18 of the 24 statements compared to only 12 statements for men. This is particularly important given that, in this sample, men were more likely than women to be sexually aggressive. The gender difference in opinions may be contributed to the fact that women are more likely than men to be the victims of sexual assault or rape, and men are more likely than women to perpetrate the crime. It is impossible to determine from this data, however, if the opinions were formed as a result of experiences with unwanted sex or if experiences occur because of the opinions held by students. However, men's lesser rejection of many of these myths may be the trigger that allows them to accept and condone sexually aggressive acts as normative.

While significant differences were found for 23 of the 24 statements, the range of mean differences indicates that some myths are equally rejected by both women and men, while some myths evoke a strong difference of opinion between women and men. About two-thirds of the 24 statements showed fairly similar opinions, as seen by the range of scores from non-significant differences for V401 to mean differences of .1, .2 and .3. One-third of the statements revealed a mean difference between women and men of .4 or better. In particular, women and men had strongly differing opinions about women who initiate sex, and about women who pretend to not want sex, about the interpretation of the word "No" in a sexual situation, about the use of force in a first-sex situation, about sexually uncontrolled perpetrators, and about the victim's responsibility

for provoking an assault. While the significant difference on 23 of 24 statements revealed that men were less likely than women to reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape, the higher mean differences for these eight statements revealed that men may be more likely than women to accept the stereotypical image of sexual assault, and men may also have a narrower definition of what constitutes sexual assault. This difference of opinions is particularly dangerous to women who are most at risk for sexual assault and rape, but it is also dangerous for men who may not identify certain situations as sexual assault. Men may believe that certain situations fall within the range of normative behaviour, but it appears that women may be less likely to accept this behaviour as normative, and identify these situations as crimes instead.

The difficulty with the issue of sexual assault and rape is that these differing opinions may lead to miscommunication and possibly sexual assault or rape. As opinions change, and society begins to accept a broader definition of sexual assault and rape, people will be able to identify more sexually coercive situations as sexual assault. However, if men are not willing to also change their opinions, they may continue with the behaviours that they deem normative and that others label as a crimes.

It is also clear by the overall low means in this study that this sample of students does reject many of the myths associated with sexual assault and rape. The gender difference in mean scores, however, reflects the different levels of acceptance by women and men in this study. It appears that further education is required to reduce the higher mean scores in this study and to bring the mean scores of women and men closer together. The discrepancy of scores may reflect the different realities of women and men in this sample with regard to sexual assault and rape. Women in this sample were more likely than men to experience unwanted sex, while men were more likely than women to perpetrate unwanted sex. In order to determine how attitude may be related to experience, it is necessary to examine the opinions of students according to their varying experiences with unwanted sex. One would expect that aggressors would have higher mean scores and that victims would have lower mean scores. The next section deals with

differences in attitudes by experience.

### **DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDES BY ATTEMPTED EXPERIENCE CATEGORIES**

In order to determine if experience and attitude were related, all students were divided into four separate groups, those with no victim or aggressor experiences (n=544), ("None"), those with victim-only experiences (victims, n=309), those with aggressor-only experiences (aggressors, n=54), and those with both victim and aggressor experiences ("Both," N=99). It is important to note that this division was made for the entire population based on the two questions asking students about their experiences with *attempted* unwanted sex ("Has another person ever tried to have sex with you when you did not want sex at that time" and "Have you ever tried to have sex with another person when that person did not want sex at that time"). Table 3-6 shows the mean score for each of the four experience groups: no experiences, victim experiences, aggressor experiences, and both experiences, as well as male and female means for comparison.

**Table 3-6**  
**Students' Attitudes by Experience with Attempted Unwanted Sex**

Variable	None	Victim	Aggressor	Both	Females	Males
<b>SDS/SS*</b>						
V364	3.0	2.9	3.4	2.9	2.9	3.2
V371	2.1	2.1	2.3	2.1	2.0	2.2
V362	1.9	1.6	2.0	1.9	1.7	2.1
V363	3.1	2.8	3.3	2.5	2.9	3.1
V388	1.7	1.6	2.0	1.8	1.6	1.9
V400	2.0	1.8	2.3	2.2	1.8	2.2
V404	1.9	1.7	2.3	2.4	1.7	2.3
<b>Force</b>						
V383	1.6	1.4	1.7	1.7	1.4	1.7
V386	1.2	1.1	1.4	1.3	1.1	1.3
V397	1.6	1.3	1.90	1.5	1.4	1.9
V396	1.6	1.3	1.9	1.5	1.3	1.7
V384	1.6	1.5	2.0	1.9	1.4	1.7
V403	2.6	2.3	2.8	2.2	2.4	2.7
<b>Perpetrator</b>						
V390	2.5	2.2	3.0	2.3	2.2	2.7
V401	2.1	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.1
V402	2.0	1.7	2.0	1.8	1.8	2.0
V395	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.1	1.2	1.4
<b>Victim</b>						
V389	1.6	1.6	1.8	1.6	1.5	1.7
V393	1.9	1.5	2.2	1.7	1.5	2.1
V394	1.6	1.4	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.8
V399	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.4
V398	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.2
V392	1.6	1.4	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.7
V391	2.4	2.1	2.5	2.4	2.2	2.5

## **Comparisons of Experience Group Attitudes and Male/Female Attitudes**

In comparing the means of the four experience groups with those of male and female means, results show that female scores were very similar to those of victims' mean scores and male scores were very similar to aggressors' mean scores for the 24 statements. These similarities are consistent with the earlier observation that the majority of victims in this sample are women while the majority of aggressors are men.

Aggressors' means were higher than males' mean scores on fifteen of 24 statements, while the remaining statements showed equal means. The difference between scores for males and aggressors was quite small in most cases, suggesting that there may be little difference between aggressive men in this sample and all men in the sample. However, the existing difference in mean scores may indicate an important distinction between sexually aggressive males and all males in the sample. In order to determine this, it is necessary to examine the difference between sexually coercive and noncoercive males. This issue will be explored later in the paper. In particular, two statements showed a relatively high (.3) difference between aggressors and males. V390, "Someone who commits sexual assault is a sexually unfulfilled person who gets carried away by an uncontrollable urge," shows a mean of 3.0 for aggressors and 2.7 for other males. Aggressive males were less likely than all males to disagree with this statement, suggesting that aggressive males may be more likely to accept the image of a sexual assaulter as deviant. Perhaps this image allows them to see their own sexually aggressive behaviour as different from that of deviant men who are sexually unfulfilled and unable to control themselves. These sexually aggressive men may be less likely than all men in the sample to define their sexual aggression as sexually coercive. V384, "Most women will pretend they don't want to have intercourse because they don't want to seem loose, but they're hoping the man will force them," also shows a .3 difference with 2.0 scored by aggressors and 1.7 for males. Aggressive males were less likely than all men in the sample to disagree with this statement suggesting that this myth may be one way that they normalize the use of force to obtain sex. Again, these issues will be explored



more fully later on.

In comparison, victims' mean scores were very similar to all females' mean scores in 17 of the 24 statements, suggesting very little difference between victims and all females. Where there was a difference between females' and victims' mean scores, the difference was only .1. While it appears that while there may be some difference between aggressors and all males, there was little difference between victims and all females. These results suggest that females' attitudes may have little association with experience. However, the attitudinal difference between all males and aggressors may indicate a connection between attitude and experience. These issues will be explored more fully later in this paper. It is important to remember that this analysis was conducted on groups divided by attempted experiences. A more complete analysis comparing attempted and completed experiences will be conducted later in this paper.

### **Comparison of Means of Experience Groups**

In comparing the four experience groups, aggressors' means were higher than the other three experience groups for all but one statement, V404, "In a sexual situation, 'No' always means 'No,'" where the "Both" experiences category is higher. Victims rated the overall lowest mean of the four experience groups in all but two statements, V363, "Women who have sex too readily with others are 'loose,'" and V395, "You can't be sexually assaulted by someone you know," where the "Both" category rated slightly lower. These results suggest that victims were more likely than any other group to reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault, while aggressors were least likely to reject these myths, findings that are consistent with the literature.

Those students in the "None" category rated means that fell between victims' and aggressors' means. Students in the "None" category scored higher means than victims on all statements, suggesting that students with no experience with attempted aggression or victimization were less likely than victims to reject the myths that perpetuate sexual

assault and rape. It is also interesting to note that "None" students rate consistently lower means than aggressors, with the exception of two perpetrator myths in which they held the same mean scores. This findings suggests that "None" students were more likely than aggressive students to reject the myths surrounding sexual assault and rape. A ranking of the three groups would place victims with lowest means, followed by "None" students, and both of these groups would be followed by aggressors, who had the highest scores. This ranking suggests that there is a connection between experiences and attitude, however it is difficult to determine if the attitude is shaped by the behaviour or the behaviours occurs because of the attitude. It makes sense that victims were more likely than other groups to reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape since victims are more likely than other groups to have suffered the consequences of these myths. Aggressors were less likely than any other group to reject these myths, and as such may have used these myths to justify their attempts at sexually aggressive behaviour as normative.

It is difficult to determine where the "Both" group fits with regard to the other three groups. Sixteen of the statements for the "Both" category showed mean scores similar to those in the victim group, compared to seven statements that were more similar to aggressors' scores. Given this information, it is possible to suggest that students with "Both" experiences were more similar to victims than to aggressors. In particular, "Both" students appeared to be more similar to victims than aggressors on statements about the perpetrator and about victims. There appears to be a split in "Both" students' loyalties to victims or aggressors when it comes to statements about the sexual double standard and force. It is impossible to determine if the "Both" experience group should be ranked between the "None" students and aggressors, or victims and the "None" group. This issue will be more fully explored later in this paper.

It may be suggested that students who lack both victimization and aggression experiences represented the "normative" opinion of this sample of students with regard to sexual assault and rape, especially since this groups represented the largest number of

students in the sample. It is also possible to speculate that something about the victims' experience caused them to more strongly reject the myths associated with sexual assault and rape, and that something about aggressors' experiences caused them to less strongly reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape. If this speculation is correct, it becomes difficult to determine how students' with "Both" experiences would fit this pattern. It appears that "Both" students were more likely than aggressors to reject the myths about perpetrators and victims, but they were equally as likely as victims and aggressors to reject the myths surrounding the sexual double standard and sex scripts and myths about force. A closer look at the significant differences of the four experience groups may give some insight to this difference in mean scores between the four groups.

### **Significant Differences Between Experience Group Pairs**

The following is a discussion of the mean scores of pairs of groups, for example, differences between victims and aggressors, between victims and "Both" students, between victims and "None" students, and so on. Before discussing the difference in mean scores for pairs of groups, it is important to note that a simple comparison of means for the four groups does not explain which differences between the groups are significant. A one-way analysis of variance with a Tukey-B test of significance at the .05 level reveals these significant differences. Table 3-7 shows the significant differences between the pairs of experience groups for each statement. The six columns on the right side of the table indicate the various combinations of groups. For example, the second column shows the difference in means between victims and the "None" category, the third column shows significant differences between victims and aggressors for each statement, and so on. The numbers in the columns represent the mean difference between the two groups indicated in that column for each statement. For example, the first two statements show no numbers and thus, no significant differences exist between any two experience groups. V362 shows that the only significant mean difference exists between victims and the "None" category, and the mean difference is .3. Refer to Table 11, to determine the direction of the difference.

**Table 3-7**  
**Significant Differences in Attitudes by Experience**

Statement	Pairs of Groups Revealing a Significant Difference					
	Victim -None	Victim- Aggressor	Victim -Both	Aggressor -None	Aggressor -Both	None- Both
<b>SDS/SS</b>						
V364 *						
V371 *						
V362	.3					
V363	.3				.8	.6
V388	.1	.4	.2	.3		
V400	.2	.5	.4			
V404		.6	.7			.5
<b>Force</b>						
V383	.2	.3	.3			
V386	.1	.3	.2	.2		
V397	.3	.6	.2	.3	.4	
V396	.3	.6		.3	.4	
V384		.5	.4	.4		.3
V403	.3	.5			.6	.4
<b>Perpetrator</b>						
V390	.3	.8		.5	.7	
V401 *						
V402	.3					.2
V395	.1	.2			.3	.2
<b>Victim</b>						
V389 *						
V393	.4	.7	.2	.3	.5	
V394	.2	.4			.3	
V399	.1	.3		.2		
V398	.1	.2			.2	
V392	.2	.4			.3	
V391	.3					

\* indicates no significant differences for any two groups of students

An overview of the significant differences between the four experience groups for each of the statements shows that four statements did not reveal any significant differences between any of the four experience groups, V364, V371, V401, and V389. Although Table 3-7 indicates that the four groups rated different means for these four statements, (ranging from a .5 difference between "None" and aggressors for V364 to a .1 difference between victims and the three other experience groups for V401), no *significant* differences existed for the four experience groups. The following is a discussion of the various pairs of experience groups.

#### Comparison of Victims and Students with No Aggression/Victimization

Victims and the "None" group showed significant differences for more statements than any of the other group comparisons, suggesting that these two groups held more significant attitudinal differences than any other combination of the three groups. On 18 of 24 statements, students with no experience as either a victim or an aggressor rated consistently higher means than victims. This finding suggests that there was a significant difference between victims and "None" students with regard to sexual assault and rape myths. "None" students were less likely than victims to reject many of the myths associated with sexual assault and rape. It is interesting to note that there were significant differences on all statements about victims and about force, while perpetrator and SDS/SS statements showed slightly fewer significant differences.

In spite of the large number of significant differences between victims and the "None" group, almost of the significant differences between victims and the "none" category were relatively small with a difference of .3 or less. Five of the statements revealed a significant difference between the two groups of .1 (V388, V386, V395, V399, and V398), while four statements showed a significant difference of .2 (V400, V383, V394, and V398). It is interesting to note that many of these smaller mean differences were found in the mean scores for statements about victims, suggesting that "None" students and victims hold relatively similar opinions about victims. Two

statements about victims revealed larger mean differences, and one of these statements showed a significant difference of .4, V393, "In most sexual assaults, the person does something to provoke the attack by their dress or actions, eg. they dress provocatively, hitchhike, etc." Victims (1.5) were significantly and substantially more likely to reject this myth than "None" students (1.9), suggesting that "None" students may be more likely than victims to blame victims for their assault. Victims (2.1) were also less likely than the "None" group (2.4) to believe V391, "One reason that women falsely report rape is that they frequently have a need to call attention to themselves," suggesting that "None" students may be less inclined to believe a woman who reports rape.

A significant difference of .3 was also found on three of the six statements about force. Victims were significantly more likely than "None" students to reject the myths, V397, "Because some people are reluctant to have sex for the first time with a person, it sometimes takes a bit of force to get your date to have sex with you for the first time," V396, "If a person engages in necking or petting, it is their own fault if their partner forces further sex involvement on them," and V403, "In order to call a sexual situation sexual assault, force must be used." It appears that "None" students may be more tolerant than victims of the use of force in some sexual situations. It also appears that "None" students may have a narrower definition of what constitutes sexual assault than do victims.

A significant difference of .3 between victim and "None" mean scores was found for two SDS/SS statements and two perpetrator statements. Victims were significantly less likely than "None" students to believe that "A woman who initiates sex will have sex with nearly anybody," and that "Women who have sex too readily are loose." This difference of opinions indicates that "None" students appear to have a more negative view of women in these circumstances than do victims.

It is important to note that while victims and "None" students showed significant differences in attitudes for many statements, the overall differences were relatively small. In general, students with no victim or aggression experience were significantly less likely than students with victim-only experiences to reject many rape supportive myths. This difference in attitudes suggests that "None" students may be more willing than victims to identify certain types of sexually coercive behaviour as normative, and less likely to identify certain situations as sexual assault. It appears that "None" students held a narrower definition of what constitutes sexual assault than did victims. While it is possible to conclude that there were significant differences between victims and "None" students' opinions regarding sexual assault and rape, it is impossible to determine if attitudes caused the behaviour or behaviour shaped the attitudes. It is possible to hypothesize that the victims' experiences led them to form stronger opinions about sexual assault and rape myths, but there is no way to prove this.

#### Comparison of Victims and Aggressors

Slightly fewer statements revealed significant differences between victims and aggressors than between victims and "None" students. Two-thirds of the statements (16 of 24) showed significant differences between victims and aggressors. In general, aggressors scored consistently higher means than victims, suggesting that aggressors were significantly less likely than victims to reject rape supportive myths. It is interesting to note that while aggressors and victims had fewer significant differences when compared to victims and the "none" category, the difference in means was *more substantial* between victims and aggressors. Of the 16 significant statements, 11 revealed substantial (>.3) differences, suggesting that victims and aggressors held very different opinions about sexual assault and rape myths.

It is interesting to note that most of the significant differences were found for the statements about force and about victims, while fewer differences were found for statements about SDS/SS and perpetrators. Only three of the seven statements regarding

the SDS/SS revealed significant differences, suggesting that victims and aggressors may have held similar opinions with regard to this issue. However, of the three significant statements regarding the sexual double standard and sex scripts (V388, V400 and V404), all showed substantial ( $>.3$ ) mean differences between victims and aggressors, suggesting where victims and aggressors differed in their opinions on this issue, the difference was strong. Aggressors (2.0) were significantly and substantially more willing than victims (1.6) to believe, "V388, "A woman who goes to the home or apartment of her date on their first date implies that she's willing to have sex." This strong difference suggests that aggressors were more likely than victims to read this kind of situation as sexual, a difference that may allow aggressors to justify their sexually coercive behaviour in such a situation. It is quite interesting to note the very strong difference of opinion with regard to the two statements about the use of "No" in a sexual situation. While victims rated lower means for V400 (1.8) and V404 (1.7), aggressors rated a significantly higher score of 2.3. Aggressors were less likely than victims to believe that, V400, "If a person changes their mind during sex and says 'No,' and their sex partner continues to have sex with them, a sexual assault has occurred", and V404, "In a sexual situation, 'No' always means 'No.'" This strong difference of opinions indicates that aggressors might be substantially less willing than victims to accept "No" at face value, a difference that may allow aggressors to ignore the verbal protests of their victims. Aggressors may also be substantially less likely to identify such situations as sexual assault.

All six of the statements regarding force showed significant differences between victims and aggressors, with four of these showing substantial differences of .5 & .6, suggesting that victims and aggressors have very different attitudes toward the use of force. Aggressors were significantly more likely (.3) than victims to agree that V383, "Being roughed up is sexually stimulating to most women," and V386, "The only way to get a cold woman turned on is to use force." It appears that aggressors may be more likely to condone the use of force as a tool of "persuasion." Since victims were more likely than aggressors to experience unwanted sex involving force, it is not surprising



that they had a stronger opinion against these myths. Aggressors and victims also revealed stronger differences (.5) for two other statements about force, V384 and V403. Again, aggressors were more likely than victims to believe that "Most women will pretend they don't want to have intercourse because they don't want to seem loose, but they're hoping the man will force them" (aggressors 2.0 and victims 1.5), and "In order to call a sexual situation sexual assault, force must be used" (aggressors 2.8 and victims 2.3). This difference of opinions indicates that aggressors might be more likely than victims to accept that women want a man to force them to have sex in order to avoid appearing loose, a finding that may allow aggressors to justify their use of force in a sexual situation. Aggressors may read a woman's reluctance to engage in sex as token and the use of force to push a reluctant woman as normative. It is also clear that aggressors were less willing than victims to identify sexually coercive situations that do not involve force as sexual assault. As a whole it appears that aggressors held a narrower definition of sexual assault than did victims. Aggressors and victims scored the highest mean differences (.6) in this category for two statements, V397 and V396. These two statements deal with the use of force to initiate sex in a first sex encounter and to push sex beyond necking and petting. The mean differences show that aggressors were significantly and substantially more accepting of these situations than victims. Again, the difference in means suggests that aggressors may use these myths to justify their sexually coercive behaviour.

Only two of the perpetrator myths showed significant differences between victims and perpetrators (V390 and V395). While V395 showed a relatively small mean difference of .2, V390, "Someone who commits sexual assault is a sexually unfulfilled person who gets carried away by an uncontrollable urge," showed the highest significant difference (.8) between victims (2.2) and aggressors (3.0), suggesting that aggressors were far less likely than victims to reject this myth about perpetrators. It appears that aggressors were substantially more likely than victims to identify sexual assaulters as deviant. This may prevent aggressors from identifying their own sexually coercive experiences as deviant. If sexual assaulters are labelled as deviant, and aggressors see

their own behaviour as normative, then they will not identify with sexual assaulters. It is interesting to note the very strong difference of opinion on this statement by victims, who appear to be willing to accept that men who commit sexual assault may be indistinguishable from other men.

Five of the seven myths regarding victims also showed significant differences between aggressors and victims, and four statements showed substantial differences. The lowest mean difference was for V398, "Most victims secretly want to be raped," where aggressors (1.3) were significantly more likely than victims (1.1) to agree with this statement, a difference which suggests that aggressors may use this myth to justify their sexually coercive behaviour. A slightly stronger difference of opinion (.3) was shown for V399 which deals with a gang rape situation. Again, aggressors were significantly more likely than victims to accept this type of situation, which is not surprising since victims are more likely than aggressors to encounter this type of situation. V394, which suggests that victims are promiscuous or have a bad reputation, and V392, which suggests that any healthy person can resist a rapist, both revealed significant differences of .4 between aggressors and victims. Again, aggressors were more likely than victims to blame the victim for the assault. In particular, V393, "In most sexual assaults, the person does something to provoke the attack by their dress or actions, eg. they dress provocatively, hitchhike, etc.," showed a substantial difference of .7 between aggressors (2.2) and victims (1.5). Of all the statements about victims, this statement revealed the strongest difference of opinions between victims and aggressors. Victims were substantially less likely than aggressors to believe that victims provoke their attacks. Again, this myth may allow aggressors to justify their sexually assaultive behaviour.

Victims and aggressors held strongly different attitudes on many statements when compared to the attitudinal differences between the other pairs of groups. Aggressors were significantly and substantially less likely than victims to reject many of the myths surrounding the sexual double standard and sex scripts, force, the perpetrator, and the victim. It appears that attitudinal differences may be related to experiential differences

for these two groups. In particular, aggressors were less likely than victims to reject the myths surrounding the use of force to obtain sex and, as such, aggressors may be more likely than victims to condone the use of force to obtain sex. Victims were more likely than aggressors to reject the myth that sexual assaulters are sexually unfulfilled and unable to control themselves and, as such, may be more able to accept that men who sexually assault women are "ordinary" men in "ordinary" circumstances. Aggressive men may use the image of a sexual assaulter as deviant in order to avoid seeing their own sexually coercive behaviour as sexual assault. In comparison, aggressors were more willing than victims to blame victims for their attacks. The difference in attitudes between aggressors and victims may be a key factor in determining how these two groups may differ in their ability to label a sexually coercive situation as sexual assault. Victims may identify a wider range of sexually coercive experiences as sexual assault, whereas aggressors would identify a narrower range of experiences as sexual assault and would be more likely than victims to blame the victim for the assault.

#### Comparison of Victims and Students with Both Victimization and Aggression

Only one-third (8) of the 24 statements showed significant differences between victims and students with "Both" aggression and victimization experiences, suggesting that "Both" students were similar to victims in many of their attitudes about sexual assault and rape. It is interesting to note that where significant difference did exist, "Both" students rated higher means than victims, suggesting that "both" students were less likely than victims to reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape. Half of these significant differences were found in the "force" category, suggesting that of all the myths, the use of force evoked the strongest difference of opinion between these two groups of students. There were no significant differences between the two groups with regard to statements about the perpetrator, suggesting that victims and "Both" students shared similar opinions about perpetrators. Only one significant difference (.2) between the two groups was found in the victim category, suggesting that victims and "Both" students also shared similar opinions about victims. It is possible that these similarities

in opinion about victims and perpetrators stems from these two groups of students' experiences as victims. Perhaps the victimization experience provides insight to myths about victims and perpetrators. "Both" students were slightly more willing than victims to believe that victims do something to provoke their assaults.

It is very interesting to note that where significant differences existed between victims and "Both" students, most of the differences in opinion centred around statements of force. Four of six statements in this section revealed significant differences. "Both" students were significantly more likely than victims to believe that women enjoy rough sex (V383), that it is acceptable to use force to turn on a cold woman (V386), and that it is acceptable to use force to obtain sex in a first-sex situation (397). While these differences existed between victims and "Both" students, the differences were relatively small (.2 or .3 difference). V384 in this category showed a stronger difference of opinion (.4) between these two groups. Victims (1.5) were significantly less likely than "Both" students (1.9) to believe that women pretend not to want intercourse hoping the man will force them. The difference of opinions on these statements revealed that "Both" students may be more likely to condone the use of force in sexual situations. This attitudinal difference between the two groups may be explained by the "Both" students' participation in aggressive behaviour. While "Both" students appeared to be similar to victims with regard to attitudes about victims and perpetrators, they appeared to be more similar to aggressors with regard to attitudes about force.

Of all eight statements showing a significant difference between victims and "Both" students, three of these statements were found in the SDS/SS category. However, only three of the seven statements in this category showed significant differences between victims and "Both" students. Victims were slightly (.2) more likely than "Both" students to reject the myth that a woman's actions of going to her date's house on a first date implies she's willing to have sex. The two statements regarding the use of "No" in a sexual situation both revealed substantial differences between victims and "Both" students. V400, which suggests that continued sex after the victim says "No" constitutes

sexual assault, showed a .4 stronger agreement for victims with this statement. V404, which suggests that "No" always means "No" revealed an even stronger difference of opinion with victims rating a score .6 higher than "Both" students. It is possible that something about the aggression experiences is related to "Both" students' attitudes, which separates them from other victims. The combination of these two statements about the use of "No" in a sexual situation and those statements about force revealed that "Both" students' attitudes are significantly different from victims with regard to these issues.

It appears that "Both" students were more similar to victims with regard to attitudes about victims and perpetrators, but "Both" students' attitudes appeared to be closer to aggressors' attitudes regarding issues of force and the use of the word "No" in a sexual situation. It is possible that "Both" students' experiences with victimization caused them to have more empathy with victims, and allowed them to identify the myths associated with perpetrators, however, their experience with aggression seems to be related to their attitudes about force and the use of the word "No." It is impossible to determine if their attitudes toward aggression allowed them to be aggressive, or if they used their attitudes to justify past aggressive behaviour. It is possible that students who had been sexual aggressors as well as victims were more likely than victims-only to condone sexually aggressive experiences as normative.

In comparing victims to the other groups ("None," "Both," and aggressors), victims appeared to have similar opinions with other students who also experienced victimization as well as aggression ("Both" experiences), than when compared to students who had no victimization or aggression experience or aggression-only experiences. There may be something about the victimization experience that caused students to have more similar opinions than when compared to other groups.

### Comparison of Aggressors and Students with Both Victimization and Aggression

Ten statements showed significant differences between aggressors and those with "Both" experiences. In all ten statements, aggressors rated higher means than "Both" students, suggesting that aggressors were less likely than "Both" students to reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape.

It is interesting to compare the significant differences between aggressors and "Both" with the significant differences between victims and "Both." Victims and "Both" showed significant differences on three of the seven statements regarding the sexual double standard and sex scripts, while aggressors and "Both" showed only one significant difference on V363. However, that one significant difference between aggressors and "Both" students was substantial (.7 difference,) with students with "Both" experiences being substantially and significantly less likely than aggressors to believe that "Women who have sex too readily are 'loose.'" It appears that "Both" students were less likely than aggressors to judge a sexually active woman. "Both" students showed no other significant difference from aggressors on all the other statements in the sexual double standard and sex scripts category. It appears that aggressors and "Both" students hold similar opinions with regard to the SDS/SS.

While victims and "Both" students showed significant differences on all the myths in the "force" category, aggressors and "Both" showed significant differences on only three of the six myths, suggesting that students with "Both" experiences were more similar to aggressors than victims with regard to myths about force. However, the three significant differences that did appear were substantial (.4 and .6 difference), suggesting important attitudinal differences between aggressors and "Both" students. In all three statements, "Both" students were more likely than aggressors to reject the myths involved. In particular, "Both" students were .4 less likely than aggressors to accept the use of force to initiate sex in a first-sex situation (V397) or to push a sexual experience beyond necking or petting (V396). Perhaps one of the most interesting findings for these

two groups is the strong (.6) difference of opinions between aggressors and "Both" students with regard to V403, "In order to call a sexual situation sexual assault, force must be used." While no significant difference was revealed on this statement for victims and "Both" students, "Both" students and aggressors showed clear differences of opinion. This suggests that victims and "Both" students may hold a more similar definition of what constitutes sexual assault than compared to aggressors. Aggressors would be substantially less likely than victims or "Both" students to define certain situations as sexual assault.

It is interesting to note that victims and "Both" students showed only one significant difference with regard to myths about the victims while aggressors and "Both" showed significant differences on four of the seven statements. This suggests that students with "Both" experiences were more similar to victims than to aggressors with regard to myths about victims. It is possible that students who experienced sexual victimization have more empathy with victims of sexual aggression, and thus share similar opinions. In particular, "Both" students were more likely than aggressors to reject the myths that victims want to be raped, (.2 difference, V398), that healthy people can resist a rapist, (.3 difference, V392), and that victims are promiscuous or have a bad reputation, (.3 difference, V394). "Both" students were also substantially (.5) more likely than aggressors to disagree that victims provoked their assaults (V393). It appears that aggressors were more likely than students with "Both" experiences to blame the victim for the assault. Again, it appears that something about the victimization experience may be related to attitudes about victims, and this relationship may be strong enough to override attitudes held by aggressors. While "Both" students also had aggression experiences, something about their victimization experiences may have caused them to be more similar in attitude to victims. It is possible that victimization experiences caused "Both" students to have more empathy and realize that victims have little control over whether or not they will be assaulted.

While victims and "Both" students showed no significant difference in mean scores for statements about perpetrators, aggressors and "Both" students differed significantly on two statements, V390, "Someone who commits sexual assault is a sexually unfulfilled person who gets carried away by an uncontrollable urge," and V395, "You can't be sexually assaulted by someone you know." In particular, aggressors were substantially (.7) more likely than "Both" students to agree with V390. It appears that victims and "Both" students were less likely than aggressors to hold stereotypical ideas about perpetrators. Aggressors were less likely than victims and "Both" students to reject the myth that you can't be assaulted by someone you know and the myth that assaulters are sexually unfulfilled men who can't control themselves. While victims and "Both" students shared similar opinions about perpetrators, aggressors and "Both" students had significantly different opinions on two myths. Again, perhaps something about the victimization of the "Both" students allowed them to reject these myths more than aggressors. It is possible that aggressors may use these myths to distance themselves from identifying their sexually coercive behaviour as deviant. If they identify rapists and men who commit sexual assault as deviant, and see themselves as ordinary, then they may be less likely to identify their own behaviour as sexually coercive, preferring instead to identify it as normative.

It appears that "Both" students were more similar to aggressors than victims on myths about the sexual double standard and sex scripts, but "Both" students were more similar to victims than aggressors on myths about the victim and the perpetrator. While "Both" students appeared to be similar to aggressors on half of the six statements about force, they were substantially different on the remaining three statements, suggesting that "Both" students were less similar to aggressors with regard to attitudes about force. It appears that "Both" students held a unique position between victims and aggressors. "Both" students were less likely than victims to reject four of the seven myths about the sexual double standard and sex scripts, and in this regard "Both" students appear to have held similar attitudes to aggressors about the SDS/SS. However, "Both" students were substantially more likely than aggressors to reject the myth that women who have sex too



readily are loose (V363), suggesting that "Both" students were more accepting of sexually active women than aggressors. It is quite interesting to note that even victims were significantly (.3) less likely than "Both" students to reject this myth, suggesting that of all groups, "Both" students were the most likely to reject this myth. Perhaps this group of students was more sexually liberal than the other groups, as indicated by their experiences with both aggression and victimization (this groups of students is made up of both women and men). "Both" students held significantly different opinions from victims about four of six statements about force, suggesting that "Both" students were less likely than victims to reject these myths, which should place "Both" students closer to the aggressor group with regard to attitude. However, "Both" students were significantly and substantially difference from aggressors on three of the six statements about force, suggesting that "Both" students held strongly different opinions about force than aggressors. "Both" students were more similar to aggressors than victims on myths about the use of force to turn on a cold woman (V386), that women enjoy rough sex (V383), and that women pretend to not want sex hoping the man will force them. However, "Both" students were more similar to victims than aggressors about myths regarding the use of force to push sex beyond necking and petting (V396), and the reliance on force to define a situation as sexual assault (V403). "Both" students fell between the mean scores of victims and aggressors with regard to V396, the use of force to initiate sex in a first-sex situation. It appears that while "Both" students were more similar to victims in their broader definition of what constitutes sexual assault, they were also more likely to condone the use of force in a sexual situation. Again, this difference may be due to the fact that this group of students was more sexually liberal than other groups. "Both" students were also more likely than aggressors to reject the myths about victims and perpetrators, and in this way were more similar to victims than aggressors with regard to attitudes about victims and perpetrators.

An analysis of the difference in intoxicant use and sexual experience between "Both" students and others students in the sample revealed that "Both" students consumed alcohol more often than other students, drank to intoxication more often than other

students, and were more likely to engage in the use of illegal drugs. "Both" students rated higher satisfaction than other students with sex play, sex acts and sexual intercourse, engaged in sex with more people than other students, and were more liberal in their approval of sex before marriage. These results show that "Both" students were significantly more sexually liberal than other students in the sample, a factor which may explain attitudinal differences found between "Both" students and other groups. "Both" students were more likely to condone the use of force in sexual situations, but they were more similar to victims in their attitudes about victims and perpetrators. It appears that this group strongly rejected myths about victims and perpetrators and victims, and as such, would be less likely to blame victims for their assaults, and less likely to hold the stereotypical image of perpetrators as deviant strangers. It also appears that "Both" students would be more likely than aggressors and equally likely as victims to identify certain situations as sexual assault, however, "Both" students appear to be more tolerant than victims of the use of force in sexual situations. It is interesting that this tolerance for force does not include situations where force is used to initiate sex in a first-sex situation, or to push sex beyond necking and petting. "Both" students had significantly and substantially different opinions about these issues compared to aggressors. While it appears that "Both" students are more liberal in their acceptance of force during sex, they are less tolerant of some sexually coercive situations than aggressors.

#### Comparison of Aggressors and Students with No Victimization/Aggression

A comparison of means between aggressors and "None" students showed significant differences for only seven of 24 statements. In all seven statements, aggressors scored higher means than "None" students, suggesting that "None" students were more likely than aggressors to reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape. It is interesting to note that four of the seven statements with significant differences were about force, suggesting that of all the myths, "None" students were more likely than aggressors to reject myths about force. In particular, "None" students

were more likely than aggressors to reject the use of force to turn on a cold woman, .2 difference, (V386), and the use of force to initiate sex in a first-sex situation, .3 difference, (V397), or to push sex beyond necking and petting, also a .3 difference (V396). "None" students were significantly and substantially (.4) more likely than aggressors to disagree that women pretend to not want sex hoping the man will force them (V384). While aggressors and "None" students appeared to have similar opinions on many statements in this study, it is clear that "None" students more strongly rejected the use of force in many situations. It is interesting to note, however, that "None" students showed no significant difference from aggressors on the statement, V403, "In order to call a sexual situation sexual assault, force must be used," suggesting that aggressors and "None" students may have similar definitions of what constitutes sexual assault. In fact, victims and "Both" students showed no significant difference on this issue as well, suggesting that victims and "Both" students would be more likely than aggressors and "None" students to include a broader range of experiences in the definition of sexual assault.

While aggressors and "None" students showed similar opinions on many statements, they also showed significant differences for one statement in the sexual double standard and sex scripts category and one in the "Perpetrator" category. "None" students were less likely (.3) than aggressors to believe that a woman who goes to her date's house on a first date implies she's willing to have sex (V388). It is possible that while aggressors and "None" students shared similar opinions on many SDS/SS statements, the difference of opinion on this statement suggests that "None" students were less likely than aggressors to judge a woman's actions as consent in this type of situation. Aggressors were also substantially more likely (.5) than "Both" students to accept the stereotypical image of a sexual assaulter as a deviant sexually uncontrolled man (V390), suggesting that this myth may be used by aggressors to distance themselves from "deviant" men.

Aggressors and "None" students differed significantly on two of the seven statements about victims (V393 and V399), suggesting that "None" students held similar opinions as aggressors on many myths about victims, however they were less likely than aggressors to accept situations of gang rape (V399) and to believe that victims provoke their attacks by the way they dress or by their actions (V393). While "None" students held similar victim-blaming attitudes as aggressors, these significant differences suggest they were less tolerant of victim-blaming than aggressors.

It appears that "None" students had more in common with aggressors than with victims. Recall that victims and "None" students held significantly different opinions on almost all (18) statements. It is interesting to note that while victims and "None" students had significantly differing opinions on many statements, those differences were small (.3 or less). In comparison, of the seven statements revealing significant differences between aggressors and "None" students, three showed substantial differences (higher than .3). Students with no experiences as victims or aggressors were substantially more likely than aggressors to reject the myths that women pretend not to want sex hoping the man will force them (V384), and that sexual assaulters are sexually unfulfilled and unable to control their urges (V390). While "None" students and aggressors held similar opinions on many rape-supportive myths, it is clear that they were less tolerant of some sexually coercive situations than aggressors, especially with regard to the use of force.

#### Comparison of "Both" Students and "None" Students

Of all the groups, "None" and "Both" students showed the least number of significant differences. Only six of the 24 statements showed significant differences between "Both" and "None" students, suggesting that these two groups of students were more likely to share similar opinions than any other group. It is also interesting to note that neither group had consistently higher means than the other group. Of the six significant differences, two showed "Both" students with higher means than "None"

students, and four showed "None" students with higher means than "Both." It is interesting that none of the significant statements were found in the victim category, suggesting that these two groups held similar opinions about victims.

Two statements about "Perpetrators" (V402 & V395) showed significant differences, but both showed relatively small differences (.2). It appears that "Both" students were slightly more likely than "None" students to reject the myths about perpetrators. "None" students were slightly more likely to believe that you can't be assaulted by someone you know (V395), and that attacks are by strangers at night (V402). The stronger rejection of these myths by "Both" students may be due to their victimization experiences.

Two statements about "Force" (V384 & V403) showed significant differences between "None" and "Both" groups, suggesting that these two groups held more similar than different opinions about force. It is interesting to note that "None" students were more likely (.3) than "Both" students to reject the myth that women pretend to not want intercourse hoping the man will force them, suggesting that "Both" students may be more tolerant of this type of situation. However, "None" students were substantially more likely (.4) than "Both" students to accept that "In order to call a sexual situation 'sexual assault,' force must be used" (V403). This finding suggests that students with no experiences would probably hold a narrower definition of what constitutes sexual assault than would students with "Both" experiences. This suggests that students with victim and aggression experiences would be more likely than students with no such experience to identify certain sexually coercive situations as sexual assault.

The last two statements that showed significant differences between "None" and "Both" students were related to the sexual double standard and sex scripts. Both statements also revealed substantial differences, but again, neither group showed consistently higher means. V363, "Women who have sex too readily with others are 'loose,'" revealed a .6 difference between "Both" and "None" students, with "None"

students scoring higher than "Both" students. It appears that "None" students were more likely than "Both" students to hold negative opinions about sexually active women. However, "Both" students were more likely than "None" students to disagree that "In a sexual situation, 'No' always means 'No'" (V404), suggesting that "None" students rejected this myth more than "Both" students. It appears that "None" students may be more disapproving of sexually active women than "Both" students, however, "Both" students were less likely than "None" students to accept 'No' at face value. These two differences in opinion may be related to the fact that "Both" students were more sexually liberal than "None" students.

While the two groups differed very little on many myths about sexual assault and rape, they did show some significant differences. Where significant differences did exist between the two groups, the direction of the differences was not consistent (i.e., one group did not have consistently higher means than the other group). However, there does appear to be a pattern to the differences. "None" students were more likely than "Both" students to accept "No" at face value, and were more likely to hold a negative opinion about sexually active women. "Both" students were more likely than "None" students to accept the myth that women pretend to not want sex hoping the man will force them. These differences may be attributed to the fact that "Both" students were more sexually liberal than other students. The remaining differences showed that "Both" students were less tolerant of myths about the perpetrator as a deviant stranger or a sexually unfulfilled and uncontrolled person than "None" students, and would be more likely than "None" students to hold a broader definition of sexual assault. In spite of these few differences, the two groups held many similar opinions about sexual assault and rape myths.

## Summary

Of all the groups, victims and "None" students appeared to be the most dissimilar in their opinions about sexual assault and rape, given the large number of significant differences between the two groups. However, many of the significant differences were relatively small, less than .3 difference between the two groups. "None" students rated consistently higher means than victims, suggesting that "None" students were less likely than victims to reject the myths associated with sexual assault and rape. In particular, "None" students were more likely than victims to hold negative opinions about sexually active women. Victims and "None" students were most likely to disagree on statements about force and victims, rather than statements about the sexual double standard and sex scripts, and the perpetrator, suggesting that "None" students may be more likely than victims to condone the use of force in sexual situations, and to blame victims for their assaults. In general, it could be suggested that victims would hold a broader definition of sexual assault than "None" students.

In contrast to the low mean differences between victims and "None" students, victims and aggressors revealed the most *substantial* mean differences in opinion, suggesting that victims and aggressors were most dissimilar in their opinions about sexual assault and rape. As expected, aggressors held consistently higher means than victims, suggesting that aggressors were less likely than victims to reject the myths associated with sexual assault and rape. In particular, victims were more likely than aggressors to reject myths about force and victims, suggesting that aggressors would be more likely than victims to blame victims for their attacks and would be more likely to condone the use of force in a sexual situation. Also, victims were more likely than aggressors to reject the myth that a sexual assaulter is sexually unfulfilled and unable to control his/herself, and to accept the word "No" at face value. The attitudinal differences between the two groups with regard to sexual assault and rape may be key factors in determining how the two groups differ in their ability to label sexually coercive experiences as sexual assault. Victims' stronger rejection of these myths suggest that

they would hold a broader definition, while aggressors' lesser rejection suggests that they would hold a narrower definition.

The "Both" group showed slightly more differences of opinion with aggressors than victims, suggesting that they were less similar in attitudes to aggressors than to victims. In general, "Both" students rated higher means than victims and lower means than aggressors, suggesting that they were less likely than victims but more likely than aggressors to reject the myths associated with sexual assault. The mean differences between "Both" students and victims were smaller than the differences between "Both" students and aggressors, again suggesting that "Both" students held opinions more similar to victims than aggressors. In particular, "Both" students were most similar in opinion to victims on statements about victims and the perpetrators, and were most similar to aggressors on statements about the sexual double standard and sex scripts. However, "Both" students were less likely than aggressors to hold a negative opinion about sexually active women, and were less likely than victims to accept "No" at face value. Of particular interest is the similarity of victims and "Both" students, and the dissimilarity of aggressors and "Both" students with regard to the definition of sexual assault, suggesting that "Both" students may hold a broader rather than a narrower definition of sexual assault, even in spite of the fact that they have been sexually aggressive. "Both" students were more accepting of the use of force than victims, but they were less accepting than aggressors of the use of force to initiate sex in a first sex experience or to push sex beyond necking or petting. It appears that something about the victimization experience may be related to "Both" students' ability to be more empathetic to victims and to reject the myths about perpetrators. While "Both" students appeared to be more tolerant of the use of force in a sexual situation, they were less accepting of it in certain circumstances.

As suggested earlier, "None" students showed many significant mean differences from victims. They also showed few differences from aggressors. Where differences did occur, aggressors had consistently higher means than "None" students, suggesting that "None" students were less likely than victims but more likely than aggressors to



reject the myths associated with sexual assault and rape. While "None" students held relatively similar opinions as aggressors, they did not agree on issues of force, suggesting that they were less tolerant of the use of force in a sexual situation. It is interesting to note that they held similar opinions about the definition of sexual assault. Of all the group comparisons, "None" students were most similar to "Both" students, as shown by the few significant differences between the two groups.

In general, victims were the least likely to accept the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape. As such they would probably be less likely than any other group to condone sexually coercive behaviour, and they would probably hold the broadest definition of what constitutes sexual assault. Given the victimization experiences of "Both" students, these students appeared to be the most similar in opinion to victims than any other group, in spite of the fact that they were also sexually aggressive. The similarity in opinions to victims suggests that "Both" students would probably hold a broader definition of sexual assault than aggressors and "None" students, but their higher tolerance of force in a sexual situation suggests that "None" students' definition of sexual assault would probably not be as broad as the victims' definition.

As suggested earlier, the "None" group may represent the "normative" opinions about sexual assault and rape, given that this group had never experienced sexual victimization or aggression and because they represent the largest percentage of the population. It is interesting that two groups of students would hold broader definitions of sexual assault than this group, suggesting that something about the victimization process may be related to a stronger rejection of the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape. It appears that further education is necessary to move the opinions of this group of students closer to those of victims and "Both" students. While "None" students have not been sexually aggressive, it may be the difference in opinions about sexual assault and rape that prevents these students from being sexually coercive. But it is not enough that these students were not coercive themselves, they were still significantly more likely than victims to accept the sexual double standard and sex scripts that lead to

sexual assault, and to condone the use of force in a sexual situation. These students were also more likely than victims to accept myths about the perpetrator, and to blame the victim for the assault. While these students may not be sexually coercive themselves, their attitudes do contribute to the perpetuation of sexual assault and rape.

It is also clear that much needs to be done to change the opinions of those who are sexually coercive. They would probably hold the narrowest definition of sexual assault and rape, and as such they would not label their own sexually coercive experiences as crimes. They may rely on the sexual double standard and sex scripts to justify their own behaviour as normative. They may rely on myths about force and the perpetrator to distance their own sexually coercive behaviour from the "real" criminals. They may blame victims for causing the assault so that they excuse themselves from being responsible for their own behaviour.

It appears that there may be some connection between University of Alberta students' attitudes about sexual assault and rape and their behaviour, as shown from the results in this study. However, causality cannot be inferred from the findings of this study. It is clear that further education on this campus is needed to change students' attitudes about sexual assault and rape. While students as a whole tended to reject the myths associated with sexual assault and rape, they were less likely to reject some than others, and some groups of students were less likely than other groups to reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape.

## THE EFFECT OF SEX AND EXPERIENCE ON ATTITUDES

Recall that 23 of 24 statements revealed significant mean differences between females and males, and that 20 of the 24 statements also showed significant differences by experience. It is also important to remember that in the various experience groups, victims were more likely to be females and aggressors were most likely to be males. However, some students reporting aggression experiences were females and some males reported victimization experiences. As well, "Both" and "None" groups consisted of both males and females. Because both sex and experience showed many significant differences, it is important to determine if any interaction existed between the two for any of the statements. An analysis of variance by sex and experience was conducted for each statement to determine if any interaction was occurring. Of all the statements, only one showed an interaction effect between sex and experience, V397, "Because some people are reluctant to have sex for the first time with a person, it sometimes takes a bit of force to get your partner to have sex with you for the first time," showed an interaction effect between sex and experience. Table 3-8 shows the results of a comparison of means for V397 by sex and experience. Because so few females reported aggression-only experiences (n=2), it is not possible to generalize this finding to the population.

**Table 3-8**  
**Mean Scores by Sex and Experience**

Experience	Male Mean (n)	Female Mean (n)
None	1.7 (247)	1.4 (259)
Victim	1.4 (36)	1.3 (259)
Aggressor	2.0 (45)	1.1 (2)
Both	1.9 (46)	1.1 (41)
Total	374	561

It is clear that there is a wide range of opinions on this statement, with mean scores ranging from 1.0 to 2.0. In general, females scored lower scores than males, and both male and female victims showed low scores. There is quite a difference in the mean scores of "Both" males and "Both" females suggesting that "Both" females were substantially more likely than "Both" males to reject this myth. Females had relatively close scores on this statement, while males had a broader range of scores. In particular, male victims scored closer to all female scores than to male scores, suggesting, again, that something about the victimization experience is related to attitude. It is impossible to determine from this analysis which mean differences were significant, and this analysis is beyond the scope of this researcher's statistical abilities. Suffice it to say that both sex and experience are important factors with regard to this myth.

#### **Females' Mean Scores by Experience**

Since both sex and experience (separately) have been shown to have an effect on students' attitudes, a separate analysis was conducted for females by experience. Females were divided into three groups, females with no experience as victims or aggressors ("None," n=279), females with victim-only experiences (n=270), and females with both victim and aggression experiences ("Both," n=43). Because only two females reported aggression-only experiences their mean scores were not included in the analysis. The mean scores for females are shown in Table 3-9.

**Table 3-9  
Females' Attitudes by Experience**

Statement	None	Victim	Both	Statement	None	Victim	Both
<b>SDS/SS*</b>				<b>Perpetrator</b>			
V364	2.8	2.9	2.8	V390	2.3	2.1	2.2
V371	2.0	2.0	1.9	V401	2.0	2.0	1.9
V362	1.8	1.6	1.5	V402	2.0	1.7	1.5
V363	3.1	2.8	2.1	V395	1.2	1.2	1.1
V388	1.6	1.5	1.6				
V400	1.8	1.7	2.0				
V404	1.7	1.7	2.0				
<b>Force</b>				<b>Victim</b>			
V383	1.5	1.4	1.5	V389	1.5	1.5	1.6
V386	1.2	1.1	1.1	V393	1.6	1.4	1.4
V397	1.4	1.3	1.1	V394	1.4	1.3	1.3
V396	1.5	1.3	1.3	V399	1.2	1.1	1.1
V384	1.4	1.4	1.5	V398	1.1	1.1	1.0
V403	2.6	2.3	2.0	V392	1.5	1.4	1.3
				V391	2.3	2.0	2.2

For most statements the means were relatively close between the three groups of women. Those females with no experience (the "None" group) had the highest mean scores in 13 of 24 statements, and equally as high as any other group on 4 other statements, suggesting that "None" females were less likely than the other two groups to reject myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape. Both victims and "Both" females had the lowest or equally low mean scores compared to the other two groups on 16 of the 24 statements, suggesting that these two groups were more similar to each other than to "None" females. It is interesting to note that victims had the highest or equally high scores of the three groups on five of the 24 statements, three of which are in the sexual double standard sex scripts category. One might almost expect that females with "Both"

experiences would rate higher than the other two groups on many of the statements, but in fact, this group showed lower means than the "None" females. A ranking of the groups would show "None" females with the highest means, followed by the other two groups, but it is impossible to rank the remaining two groups.

While Table 3-9 shows the difference in means between the three groups, it is impossible to determine which groups have *significantly* different means. A Tukey-B test of significance reveals this information. Since no group was created for aggressive women, only three possible combinations of groups were created, victim-"None," victim-"Both," and "Both"-"None." Table 3-10 shows the results of the Tukey-B test of significance.

**Table 3-10**  
**Significant Differences Between Female Groups**

Statement	Pairs of Groups Revealing a Significant Difference		
	Victim -None	Victim -Both	None- Both
<b>SDS/SS</b>			
V362	.1		
V363		.7	1.0
<b>Force</b>			
V397		.1	
V396	.2		
V403		.3	
<b>Perpetrator</b>			
V402	.5		
<b>Victim</b>			
V393	.1		
V391	.3		

### Significant Differences Between Female Groups

Table 3-10 shows only the statements with significant differences between the three groups of women. The numbers in the columns represent the difference in mean scores for the grouped pairs listed at the top of the table. Of the 24 statements, one-third (8) showed significant differences, suggesting that experience may be related to attitude. All but one of the statements revealing significant differences between the various combinations of groups of women were between victims and "None" or victims and "Both." The one statement (V362) that showed a difference between "None" females and "Both" females also revealed a substantial difference (1.0). In fact, this difference was the strongest of all the statements. "None" women were significantly and substantially more likely than "Both" women to agree that "Women who have sex too readily are 'loose.'" This finding suggests that women who have been sexually aggressive hold more liberal ideas about sexually active women than women with no aggression or victimization experiences.

V362 also showed a significant and substantial (.7) difference between victims and "Both" females. Victims were also more likely than "Both" females to agree that "Women who have sex too readily are 'loose.'" This suggests that "Both" women may have had a more liberal acceptance of sexually active women than victims. It is possible that since "Both" females were sexually aggressive *and* sexually victimized, they might also have a higher rate of sexual involvement than the other groups of women, which may explain their stronger acceptance about sexually active women.

Of the remaining significant differences between victims and other females, most differences were relatively small (.3 or less). However, V402, "Most sexual assaults are by strangers at night," showed a substantial difference between victims and "None" females. "None" females were significantly and substantially less likely than victims to reject this myth. Victimized females were more likely than non-victimized females to recognize that assaults can occur with someone the victim knows, suggesting that non-

victimized women may be more likely to hold the stereotypical image of a rapist as a stranger who attacks at night. Victims were also more likely than "None" females to reject the myths, V362, "A woman who initiates sex will probably have sex with nearly anybody," V396, "If a person engages in necking or petting, it is their own fault if their partner forces further sex involvement on them," V393, "In most sexual assaults, the person does something to provoke the attack by their dress or actions, eg. they dress provocatively, hitchhike, etc.," and V391, "One reason that women falsely report a rape is that they frequently have a need to call attention to themselves."

On average, females did not hold significantly different opinions about rape-supportive myths regardless of experience. However, "None" females were more likely than "Both" and victim females to hold a negative opinion about sexually active women. "None" females were also more likely than victims to accept the stereotypical image of a rapist as a stranger who attacks at night.

### **Males' Mean Scores by Experience**

A similar analysis was conducted for males. Males were divided into four groups, males with no victimization or aggression experiences ("None," n=256), males with victim-only experiences (n=39), males with aggression-only experiences (n=52), and males with both aggression and victimization experiences ("Both," n=56). Table 3-11 shows the mean scores for each of the four groups, and Table 3-12 shows the results of the Tukey-B test of significance.



**Table 3-11**  
**Males' Attitudes by Experience**

Variable	None	Victim	Aggressor	Both
<b>SDS/SS*</b>				
V364	3.1	2.9	3.4	3.1
V371	2.2	2.2	2.4	2.3
V362	2.1	1.9	2.0	2.2
V363	3.2	2.8	3.3	2.9
V388	1.8	1.9	2.1	2.0
V400	2.2	2.0	2.3	2.3
V404	2.2	2.1	2.4	2.7
<b>Force</b>				
V383	1.7	1.4	1.8	1.9
V386	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.5
V397	1.7	1.4	2.0	1.9
V396	1.7	1.6	1.9	1.6
V384	1.8	1.7	2.1	2.2
V403	2.7	2.5	2.8	2.4
<b>Perpetrator</b>				
V390	2.8	2.4	3.0	2.4
V401	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.0
V402	2.1	1.9	1.9	2.0
V395	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.2
<b>Victim</b>				
V389	1.7	1.6	1.8	1.6
V393	2.1	2.0	2.3	2.0
V394	1.8	1.7	1.9	1.6
V399	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.5
V398	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.2
V392	1.8	1.7	1.9	1.6
V391	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.6

While males appear to have more mean differences between the four groups than that shown for females, it is difficult to tell which mean differences are significant. A one-way analysis of variance with a Tukey-B test of significance measured significant difference at the .05 level. Table 3-12 shows the results of this analysis. Males could be divided into six comparison groups, "none"-victim, "none"-aggressor, "none"-both, victim-aggressor, victim-"both," and aggressor-"both."

**Table 3-12  
Significant Differences Between Male Groups**

Statement	Victim-Aggressor	Nonc-Both
V384		.4
V397	.6	
V404		.5

**Significant Differences Between Male Groups**

Table 3-12 shows that of 24 statements, only three showed significant differences between males, V384, V397, and V404. This is a surprising finding since there was a wider range of mean scores between the male groups than between the female groups, yet the female groups showed more significant differences than the male groups. This finding suggests that males were more similar rather than different in their attitudes toward sexual assault and rape. Of all the possible comparison groups, only two revealed significant differences, victim-aggressor and "None"-Both males. While one might assume there should be many differences in attitude between male victims and male aggressors, only one statement revealed a significant difference.

Male victims were substantially more likely (.6) than male aggressors to reject the myth V397, "Because some people are reluctant to have sex for the first time with a person, it sometimes takes a bit of force to get your date to have sex with you for the first time." Aggressive males were significantly and substantially more likely than victimized males to condone the use of force in a first-sex situation. While it is understandable why victimized males would be less likely than aggressive males to condone this type of aggression, it is not clear why victimized males differed from aggressive males on only this one statement.

The only other two significant differences between groups of males were between "None" and "Both" males. "Both" males rated significantly and substantially higher scores than "None" males on V384 (.4 higher), "Most women will pretend they don't want to have intercourse because they don't want to seem loose, but they're hoping the man will force them" and V404 (.5 higher), "In a sexual situation, 'No' always means 'No.'" These results suggest that "None" males would be more likely than "Both" males accept "No" at face value and less likely to ignore a woman's resistance to sex. Again, while these results make sense, it is not clear why so few differences exist between aggressive males and other males as suggested by the literature.

These results are somewhat puzzling. One would assume that there would be more significant differences between aggressive males and other males. It is possible that males in general hold similar attitudes on the issues represented with the 24 statements in this study, with the exception of the three statements just discussed. One possible answer to this puzzle is that this analysis has been conducted on students responding to the questions about *attempted* experiences. Some of these attempted experiences would be completed, while others would not. In order to determine if level of aggression is related to attitudes about sexual assault and rape, it is necessary to compare means of males with no aggression experience, those with low aggression experiences (attempted only), those with high aggression experiences (attempted and competed unwanted sex).

## Summary

In general females showed very few difference of opinion on the 24 statements, revealing that they were more similar than different regardless of experience. Men held even fewer significant differences of opinion, suggesting that they were even more similar to each other than the women in the sample.

In comparing the results for females and males, it appears that females with no experience and aggressive males had the highest scores for their respective groups. This suggests that these two groups were most traditional in their attitudes toward sexual assault and rape, and were less likely than others to reject rape-supportive myths. The groups with the lowest means, "Both" females and victimized males, appeared to be least traditional in their attitudes and were more likely than the other groups to reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape. However, males consistently held higher mean scores than females. The Tukey-B test of significance revealed that, as a whole, all males were more similar than different to each other in attitude and females were more similar than different to each other in attitude. Females showed slightly more significant differences in attitude than males.

It is important to keep in mind that the previous analysis was conducted on the *attempted* experiences of students. Some of the students may have only had attempted experiences while others' experiences were completed. It is possible that there is an attitudinal difference between students with no experience, students with attempted only experiences, and those with completed experiences, and this will be explored in the next section.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES BY LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE

### Female Attitudes by Level of Victimization

Females were divided into three separate groups, those with no victimization experience (n=282), Those with low victimization (attempted only experiences, n=140), and those with high victimization experiences (completed experiences, n=173). A comparison of means was conducted for these three groups of females. Table 3-13 shows the mean scores for each statement and each group, and Table 3-14 shows the results of the Tukey-B analysis.

**Table 3-13**  
**Females' Attitudes by Level of Victimization**

Statement	None	Low	High	Statement	None	Low	High
<b>SDS/SS*</b>				<b>Perpetrator</b>			
V364	2.8	2.9	2.9	V390	2.3	2.2	2.1
V371	2.0	2.0	2.0	V401	2.0	2.0	1.9
V362	1.8	1.5	1.6	V402	2.0	1.7	1.7
V363	3.0	2.7	2.7	V395	1.2	1.1	1.2
V388	1.6	1.5	1.5				
V400	1.8	1.8	1.7				
V404	1.7	1.7	1.7				
<b>Force</b>				<b>Victim</b>			
V383	1.4	1.4	1.4	V389	1.5	1.6	1.5
V386	1.1	1.1	1.1	V393	1.6	1.4	1.4
V397	1.4	1.2	1.3	V394	1.4	1.4	1.3
V396	1.5	1.3	1.3	V399	1.2	1.1	1.1
V384	1.4	1.4	1.5	V398	1.1	1.1	1.1
V403	2.6	2.3	2.2	V392	1.5	1.3	1.4
				V391	2.3	2.1	2.0

Table 3-13 shows the mean scores of females by level of victimization, (no victimization, low victimization, and high victimization), for each of the 24 statements. In general, there was little variation in mean scores between the three groups. Nonvictimized women tended to have higher scores than the other two groups, suggesting that nonvictimized women were less likely than victimized women to reject the myths associated with sexual assault and rape. While many of the statements showed little difference in the mean scores of the three groups, some statements showed differences of .2, .3 and .4, suggesting a relationship between attitude and experience. A Tukey-b test revealed that nine of the 24 statements did indeed show significant differences between the groups. Table 3-14 shows the mean differences for the various comparison groups.

**Table 3-14  
Significant Differences Between Female Victimization Groups**

Statement	None-Low	None-High
<b>SDS/SS</b>		
V362	.3	
V363	.3	.3
<b>Force</b>		
V397	.2	
V396	.2	.2
V403	.3	.4
<b>Perpetrator</b>		
V402	.3	.3
<b>Victim</b>		
V393		.2
V394		.1
V391		.3

Of the nine statements revealing significant differences between female groups, all showed the significant differences to be between nonvictimized and other females, rather than between high and low victimized females. This suggests that there was no difference in attitude between the two levels of victimization. In all of the statements revealing significant differences, nonvictimized females rated higher means than victimized females, suggesting that nonvictimized females were less likely than victimized females to reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape. Six statements revealed significant differences between nonvictimized and low victimized females, compared to seven significant differences between nonvictimized and high victimized females.

In particular, nonvictimized females were more likely (.3) than low victimized females to believe that "Women who have sex too readily are loose" (362). Nonvictimized females were also more likely (.3) than both high and low victimized females to believe that "A woman who initiates sex will probably have sex with nearly anybody" (V363). It appears that women in the sample generally held similar attitudes with regard to the sexual double standard and sex scripts, but nonvictimized women held slightly more negative opinions about sexually active women.

By far, the majority of dissenting opinions were held over the issue of force, with nonvictimized women less likely to reject these myths than victimized women. Low victimized women rated a lower score (.2 lower) than nonvictimized women on V397, the statement about the use of force to obtain sex for the first time from a reluctant partner. Both low and high victimized females also scored .2 lower than nonvictimized women on V396, the statement about the use of force to push sex beyond necking and petting. These two statements revealed that nonvictimized women were more likely than victimized women to condone the use of force in these types of situations. Of particular interest is the difference in opinion regarding V403, "In order to call a sexual situation 'sexual assault,' force must be used." Nonvictimized women scored .3 higher than low victimized women and .4 higher than high victimized women on this statement,

suggesting that nonvictimized women would hold a narrower definition of sexual assault compared to victimized women.

Only one perpetrator statement showed any significant difference between nonvictimized and victimized women. Nonvictimized women were .3 less likely than both high and low victimized women to reject the myth that "Most sexual assaults are attacks by strangers at night." It appears that nonvictimized women would be more likely than victimized women to accept the stereotypical image of a sexual assault.

It is quite interesting to note that high victimized women showed significantly different opinions compared to nonvictimized females, but that low victimized women did not show significant differences of opinion on statements surrounding victims. Perhaps the higher level of completed victimization caused women to have more empathy with victims than their lesser victimized counterparts. In particular, high victimized women were more likely than nonvictimized women to reject the myths that the victim provokes the attack (V393, .2 difference), that the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation (V394, .1 difference), and that women falsely report rape to call attention to themselves (V391, .3 difference). It is clear that high victimized females were significantly less likely than nonvictimized females to blame the victim for the assault and to question the victims' reports of rape. Again, it is interesting that low victimized females did not show significant differences of opinion from nonvictimized females on these statements. It is possible that the low victimized females may attempt to distance themselves from their own sense of vulnerability in a sexually coercive situation by separating themselves from victims through victim blaming. If they believe that victims are somehow different from them, they will believe themselves to be safe, when in fact, very often the chances of becoming a victim rest not in the woman's ability to prevent rape or to resist sexual coercion, but on the aggressors' decision not to follow through in a sexually coercive situation. It appears that low victimized women distanced themselves from high victimized women on the issue of victims. It is important to note, however, that no significant differences existed between high and low victimized women,



suggesting that they held more similar rather than different opinions on this issue of victimization.

In summary, there were few differences between the three groups of women as seen by the large number of similar opinions on two-thirds of the statements in this study. However, some important differences were found between nonvictimized and victimized women. In particular, nonvictimized women were more likely than all victimized women to hold negative opinions about sexually active women, to condone the use of force in a first-sex situation, or to push sex beyond necking and petting, to hold a stereotypical image of a sexual assault as an attack at night by a stranger, and to believe that sexual assault must involve force in order to be defined as sexual assault. Nonvictimized women were also more likely than high victimized women to blame the victim for the assault and to disbelieve the victims motives for reporting an assault. While nonvictimized and victimized women shared very similar opinions on many issues, these significant differences suggest that nonvictimized women were more likely than victimized women to hold a narrower definition of sexual assault, while victimized women would hold a broader more inclusive definition of sexual assault and rape. These results are not surprising. It makes sense that victimized women would hold a broader definition of sexual assault, because their reality has included a sexually coercive experience that may have made them more empathetic to the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape. It is of particular interest that low victimized women showed no significant differences with nonvictimized women with regard to victim myths, but that high victimized women did show a significant difference in opinion with nonvictimized women on this issue. Again, while there were no significant differences between high and low victimized women on myths surrounding victims, it appears that the high victimized women were more likely than other women to reject some of the myths associated with victimization. It does appear that victimization experience may be related to attitude, however it is impossible to determine causation.

## Males' Attitudes by Level of Aggression

Males were divided into three categories, males with no aggression experience (n=304), males with low aggression experiences (attempted aggression, n=79), and males with high aggression experiences (completed aggression, n=29). A comparison of means was conducted for the three groups and results are shown in Table 3-15.

**Table 3-15**  
**Males' Attitudes by Level of Aggression**

Statement	None	Low	High	Statement	None	Low	High
<b>SDS/SS*</b>				<b>Perpetrator</b>			
V364	3.1	3.2	3.5	V390	2.7	2.7	2.7
V371	2.2	2.3	2.3	V401	2.1	2.0	2.4
V362	2.1	2.1	2.1	V402	2.1	2.0	2.0
V363	3.1	3.1	3.0	V395	1.4	1.3	1.3
V388	1.9	2.1	1.8				
V400	2.2	2.2	2.8				
V404	2.2	2.5	2.8				
<b>Force</b>				<b>Victim</b>			
V383	1.6	1.8	1.8	V389	1.7	1.8	1.4
V386	1.3	1.4	1.7	V393	2.1	2.2	2.0
V397	1.6	1.9	2.0	V394	1.8	1.8	1.7
V396	1.7	1.7	1.9	V399	1.4	1.5	1.6
V384	1.8	2.1	2.2	V398	1.2	1.2	1.2
V403	2.7	2.7	2.2	V392	1.7	1.7	1.8
				V391	2.5	2.6	2.5

While Table 3-15 revealed some substantial differences in opinion between the three groups, the results do not mean that the findings are significant, and so a comparison of means with a Tukey-b test of significance was conducted. Because only two statements revealed significant differences, no table was created. Instead the results are discussed below.

The results of the significance testing showed that only two statements showed significant differences, and not the ones expected. Both statements dealt with the issue of force. The first significant difference was between low and high aggression males, with high aggression males being .3 more likely than low aggression males to accept the myth that "the only way to get a cold woman turned on is to use force" (V386). This significant finding suggests that high aggression males were more likely to condone the use of force to "persuade" a reluctant women to have sex. While it appears that nonaggressive and low aggression males held similar opinions about this issue, high aggression males were less likely reject this myth. This myth may allow highly aggressive males to justify their sexually coercive behaviour. If they believe that cold women enjoy being turned on by force, they will continue to use this type of coercion.

The second statement revealing a significant difference showed a difference of opinions between nonaggressive and low aggression males. Low aggression males were significantly more likely (.3 difference) than nonaggression males to believe that women pretend not to want sex hoping the man will force them (V384). This difference suggests that low aggression males, or those with attempted aggression only, may be more likely than nonaggressive males to ignore a women who resists sex. It is not clear, however, why there is a significant difference between nonaggressive and low aggression males, but not between high aggression males and other males on this issue.

While one would expect more significant differences between high aggression males and other males, only one statement revealed this kind of difference. It appears that males hold more similar rather than different opinions about the myths that

perpetuate sexual assault and rape.

## **Summary**

While females showed several significant differences of opinion between nonvictimized and other females, males showed very few significant differences based on experience. It is possible that the few males ( $n=29$ ) reporting high aggression experiences affected the mean scores, and that a larger number of cases in this group would have yielded different and perhaps significant results. However, it seems a mixed blessing to ask for more aggressive males in order to measure their attitudes about sexual assault and rape. While females showed significant differences of opinion between nonvictimized and victimized experiences, males showed few significant differences of opinion. This suggests that males held more similar rather than different opinions about sexual assault and rape, while victimized females held different opinions compared to nonvictimized females about these issues.

It appears that experience may be related to attitude for women, but less likely for men, as seen by the higher number of significant difference between women compared to the two significant differences for men. While all significant differences for women were between nonvictimized and victimized women, the two significant statements for men showed one between high and low aggression males and one between non and high aggression males. These results suggest the need for further education among University of Alberta students. It appears that the victimization experience may be related to the stronger rejection of myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape. Women's experiences with attempted and completed victimization were related to their stronger rejection of these myths. It is also interesting to note the difference between nonvictimized women and high victimized women with regard to victim myths. While high victimized women held significant differences of opinion about victim myths, low victimization women did not show a similar significant difference, suggesting that a

completed victimization experience may cause the victim to understand the myths associated with victims. Again, this lack of significant differences between low victimization and nonvictimized women may suggest that low victimization women do not identify as strongly as high victimized women with the myths about victims.

### **Males' Attitudes by Level of Victimization**

A significant number of males reported victimization experiences. Of the 415 males responding to this study, approximately one-quarter reported some level of victimization. Sixty-four males reported low victimization experiences (attempted only) and 31 reported high victimization experiences (completed experiences with unwanted sex). In order to determine if victimization experience is related to attitude for males, a comparison of means between the three groups (nonvictimized, low, and high victimized males) was conducted. The results are offered in Table 3-16.

**Table 3-16**  
**Males' Attitudes by Level of Victimization**

Statement	None	Low	High	Statement	None	Low	High
<b>SDS/SS*</b>				<b>Perpetrator</b>			
V364	3.2	3.1	2.8	V390	2.8	2.6	2.1
V371	2.2	2.2	2.4	V401	2.1	2.2	2.0
V362	2.1	2.0	2.2	V402	2.1	2.1	1.7
V363	3.2	2.9	2.7	V395	1.4	1.2	1.3
V388	1.9	2.0	1.9				
V400	2.2	2.1	2.3				
V404	2.2	2.5	2.4				
<b>Force</b>				<b>Victim</b>			
V383	1.7	1.7	1.7	V389	1.7	1.5	1.7
V386	1.3	1.4	1.4	V393	2.1	2.1	1.9
V397	1.7	1.7	1.7	V394	1.8	1.7	1.6
V396	1.7	1.6	1.6	V399	1.4	1.4	1.4
V384	1.8	2.1	1.9	V398	1.2	1.2	1.2
V403	2.7	2.6	2.3	V392	1.8	1.6	1.7
				V391	2.5	2.9	2.0

A Tukey-b test of significance showed that only two statements revealed significant differences for the three groups of males. Nonvictimized males were significantly and substantially (.7) more likely than high victimized males to believe that "Someone who commits sexual assault is a sexually unfulfilled person who gets carried away by an uncontrollable urge." This finding suggests that high victimized males were less likely than nonvictimized males to accept the stereotypical image of a sexual assaulter as sexually deviant and uncontrolled. It is possible that high victimized males recognize from their own experiences that sexual assault can occur with ordinary people under ordinary circumstances. The only other significant difference between males was for V391, "One reason that women falsely report a rape is that they frequently have a need to call attention to themselves." High victimized males were substantially (.9) and

significantly less likely than low victimized males to accept this myth, suggesting that high victimized males have more empathy for victimized females than low victimized males.

In general, there was little difference between males with regard to victimization experience. Most statements showed no significant differences between the three groups, suggesting that males were more similar than different in their opinions about sexual assault and rape. The two exceptions show that high victimized males may be more empathetic with victimized females than other males, and less likely to accept the stereotypical image of a sexual assaulter as sexually unfulfilled and uncontrolled.

### **Attitudinal Differences Between Female and Male Victims**

Because males and females in general held significantly different opinions about most of the myths in this study, and because both males and females reported victimization experiences, it is important to explore the attitudinal differences between male and female victims. Given the previous results about victimized males and females, it makes sense to assume that there would be more differences rather than similarities in opinion between the two groups. Four hundred and eight students reported some level of victimization, 95 males and 313 females. Of the males reporting some victimization, 64 reported low victimization (attempted only) and 31 reported high victimization (completed experiences). Of the females, 140 reported low experiences and 173 reported high victimization experiences. A comparison of means between the four groups was conducted and the results are offered in Table 3-17.

**Table 3-17**  
**A Comparison of Male and Female Victims' Attitudes**

Statement	Males		Females	
	Low Victimization	High Victimization	Low Victimization	High Victimization
<b>SDS/SS*</b>				
V364 *	3.1	2.8	2.9	2.9
V371 *	2.2	2.4	2.0	2.0
V362	2.0	2.2	1.5	1.6
V363 *	2.9	2.7	2.7	2.7
V388	2.0	1.9	1.5	1.5
V400 *	2.1	2.3	1.8	1.7
V404	2.5	2.4	1.7	1.7
<b>Force</b>				
V383	1.7	1.7	1.4	1.4
V386	1.4	1.4	1.1	1.1
V397	1.7	1.7	1.2	1.3
V396	1.6	1.6	1.3	1.3
V384	2.1	2.0	1.4	1.5
V403 *	2.6	2.3	2.3	2.2
<b>Perpetrator</b>				
V390 *	2.6	2.1	2.2	2.1
V401 *	2.2	2.0	2.0	1.9
V402	2.1	1.7	1.7	1.7
V395 *	1.2	1.3	1.1	1.2
<b>Victim</b>				
V389 *	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.5
V393	2.1	1.9	1.4	1.4
V394	1.7	1.6	1.4	1.3
V399	1.4	1.4	1.1	1.1
V398 *	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.1
V392	1.6	1.7	1.4	1.4
V391	2.9	2.0	2.1	2.0

\* indicates no significant differences between any two groups



Table 3-17 shows that in general, all female victims scored lower means than all male victims, suggesting that female victims were more likely than male victims to reject the myths that perpetuate sexual assault and rape. Females tended to show little difference in the means between high or low victimized groups, with all scores within .1 of each other. Recall that these two groups showed no significant difference in opinion on any of the 24 statements in the previous analysis. There was more range in scores between the two male groups, although recall that there was little significant difference between males in the previous analysis of male victims. It appears that there is more variation between male victims and female victims than between high and low victims of the same gender. A Tukey-b test of significance revealed which mean scores were significantly different.

A discussion of the significant differences within genders has already been completed and so this discussion focuses on the significant differences between the male and female groups. The "\*" beside the statement indicator in the far left column of Table 3-17 indicates which statements held no significant differences between any of the pairs of groups in this analysis. It is interesting to note that all victims tended to hold similar opinions on the sexual double standard and sex scripts as well as on perpetrators, as seen by the high number of statements in each category that do not have significant mean differences. It is also quite interesting to note that all victims tended to have a similar opinion on V403, "In order to call a sexual situation 'sexual assault,' force must be used," suggesting that they may have similar ideas about what constitutes sexual assault. However, here, the differences end.

Where significant differences did occur, they were between male victims and female victims rather than between high and low victimized males or females. Table 3-18 shows the significant differences for each of the pair groupings. The groups were divided into low females/low males, low females/high males, high females/low males, and high females/high males. Table 3-18 indicates the mean differences between the various pair groups of males and females.

**Table 3-18**  
**Significant Differences Between Female and Male Victims**

Statement	Low females/ Low males	Low females/ High males	High females/ Low males	High females/ High males
SDS/SS				
V362	.5	.7	.4	.6
V388	.5		.5	
V404	.8	.7	.8	.7
Force				
V383			.3	
V386	.3	.3	.3	.3
V397	.5	.5	.4	.4
V396	.3		.3	
V384	.7	.6	.6	.5
Perpetrator				
V402	.4		.4	
Victim				
V393	.7	.5	.7	.5
V394	.3		.4	.3
V399	.3	.3	.3	.3
V392		.3		.3
V391	.8		.9	

In general, many existing significant differences were substantial (above .3), suggesting that male and female victims had very different opinions about these myths. Numbers in *all four* columns of Table 3-18 indicate that both female groups held significantly different opinions from both male groups, as is the case in half of the statements, suggesting that gender was a significant factor in the difference of opinions. Of all categories, it appears that male and female victims were more similar than different on the issue of perpetrators, as seen by the single significant difference in this category. However, the significant difference for V402, "Most sexual assaults are by

strangers at night," was found only between low victimized males and both groups of victimized females. This may indicate that males who have had a completed unwanted sexual experience are more similar to other victimized females rather than to low victimized males with regard to the stereotype about stranger rape. In general though, males and females similarly reject the myths associated with perpetrators.

While female and male victims rated similar opinions on four of the seven statements about the sexual double standard and sex scripts, they held strong opinions about the other three statements in this category. Both V362 and V404 show significant differences between both female groups with both male groups. Both groups of male victims were significantly and substantially more likely than both groups of female victims to believe that "A woman who initiates sex will probably have sex with nearly anybody," and were less likely to believe that "In a sexual situation, 'No' always means 'No.'" It appears that the victimization experience did not eliminate the sex differences on these two issues. Low victimized males were also significantly more likely than both groups of females to believe that "A woman who goes to the home or apartment of her date on their first date implies that she is willing to have sex." It is interesting to note that high victimized males did not register any significant difference from victimized females on this statement, and their mean score was somewhat below that of low victimized males, suggesting that males with completed unwanted sexual experiences were closer in opinion to other victimized females than were low victimized males.

Five of the six statements about force showed significant differences between the groups of victimized males and females. It is interesting to note that only high victimized females and low victimized males showed a significant difference on V383, "Being roughed up is sexually stimulating to most women," even though both male groups showed the same mean scores and both female groups showed the same mean scores. It is important to remember that the mean scores are rounded to the nearest decimal place, so that even though the means may look identical, there can be some variation within the numbers. While other victimized groups appear to have similar

opinions on this issue, females with completed experiences and males with only attempted experiences feel very differently about rough sex. It is possible that this difference exists because males with attempted only experiences may have been less likely to encounter rough sex compared to females who experienced completed unwanted sex.

Low males also differed from both groups of females on the issue of the use of force to push sex beyond necking or petting. Males with attempted only experiences were significantly more likely than both groups of females to condone this type of situation, however, high victimized males did not show significant differences from the two groups of females, suggesting that high victimized males may be more empathetic to female victims with regard to this issue than other males.

The other three statements that showed significant differences for this category of statements, showed significant differences between both groups of females and both groups of males. Both groups of females were significantly and, in many cases, substantially more likely than both groups of male victims to reject the myths that "The only way to get a cold woman turned on is to use force," that force is acceptable in obtaining sex a first-sex situation, and that women pretend not to want sex hoping the man will force them. It is clear from these statements that men are more tolerant of the use of force in sexual situations compared to women, regardless of level of victimization.

There were also many differences of opinion about victims, which is surprising. One would expect that the victimization experience would cause students to reject the myths about victims. However, male victims were less likely than female victims to reject the myths associated with victims. Perhaps the female victimization experience is different enough from male victims' experiences to warrant this difference in opinions. Or perhaps male victims are reluctant to identify themselves as victims and as such reject the myths associated with victims.

Male and female victims showed significant differences on five of the six statements dealing with victims. In particular, both groups of male victims were more likely than both groups of female victims to believe that the victim provokes the attack (V393), and to condone a gang rape scenario. It appears that these two issues may be more related to gender than to victimization experience. Low victimized males were also more likely than both groups of females to believe that the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation (V394). It is interesting to note that high victimized males also showed a significant difference from the high victimized females on this statement, but did not show such a difference from the low victimized females. It is possible that high victimized males may be closer to low victimized males regarding victim blaming. It appears that high victimized females are less likely than all victims to reject this myth.

It is interesting that high victimized males showed a significant difference from both groups of victimized females regarding a healthy person's ability to resist rape, while low victimized males showed no such significant difference. One would expect this pattern to be reversed with low victimized males showing a significant difference from females and high victimized males being more similar to victimized females, with the assumption that males with attempted only experiences being more sure that it is possible to resist a rapist. It is not clear why males who have experienced completed unwanted sex would show a significant difference from victimized females while their lesser victimized counterparts did not. Victimized females were more likely than high victimized males to reject this myth.

Low victimized males did show a significant difference from both groups of females with regard to the myth that women falsely report rape to call attention to themselves (V391). High victimized males did not score a significantly different mean from females, suggesting that high victimized males were more similar to victimized females with regard to this issue than were low victimized males.

## Summary

While females showed significant differences of opinion between levels of victimization on one-third of the statements in this study, and males showed only two significant differences between levels of victimization, male victims and female victims showed many more differences of opinion.

It is interesting to note that both male and female victims held relatively similar opinions on many statements, especially with regard to the perpetrator and the sexual double standard and sex scripts. Male and female victims also held a similar opinion about the sexual assault being defined by force (V403), suggesting that male and female victims share similar opinions on some issues relating to sexual assault and rape.

However, significant differences existed on many other issues, suggesting that males were significantly less likely than females to reject the myths associated with sexual assault and rape, regardless of victimization experience. In particular, male and female victims differed on issues surrounding the use of force and victim myths. Where significant differences existed, they were also often substantial differences, suggesting that not only did males and females feel different about these issues, but the differences of opinion were also strong. Males were more likely than females to hold a negative opinion about sexually active women, and were less likely to accept "No" at face value. Males were also more likely to condone the use of force to stimulate a cold woman, to obtain sex in a first-sex situation, and to believe that women pretend not to want sex, hoping the man will force them. Men were also more likely than women to believe that victims provoke their attacks, and to condone a gang rape situation.

Given this information, it is probably safe to conclude that male victims held a narrower definition of sexual assault than do female victims. One might assume that the victimization experience would be enough to cause victims to strongly reject the myths

associated with sexual assault and rape, however, this does not appear to be the case in this study. It is interesting to note that high victimized males held more similar opinions to other victimized females than did low victimized males on several issues, suggesting that males' experience with completed unwanted sexual experiences caused them to be more empathetic to other victimized women. In particular, high victimized males were more similar to female victims than were low victimized males regarding the myth that a woman's actions of going to her date's house on a first date indicates consent to sex, the myth that force to push sex beyond necking and petting is acceptable, the stereotypical image of the rapist as a stranger who attacks at night, and the myth that women falsely report rape to get attention. Perhaps something about their own victimization experiences caused these men to reject these myths more strongly than other men.

In general, it is possible that this difference of opinions means that high victimized males held a slightly broader definition of sexual assault and rape compared to other victimized males when all victimized males are compared to victimized females, however, the very few significant differences between the groups suggests that the definition is probably more similar than different. It is not clear why males' experiences with victimization did not cause them to hold more similar rather than different opinions about sexual assault and rape myths compared to female victims. One would expect that the victimization experience would cause these groups to be more similar rather than different, yet it appears that the groups were indeed significantly different on many statements. It is possible that females' experiences with victimization were somehow characteristically different from male victims' experiences. This is an area that requires further investigation.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A CLOSER LOOK AT FEMALE VICTIMIZATION EXPERIENCES

#### INTRODUCTION

Students who experienced unwanted sex while registered at the University of Alberta were asked to provide specific information about their most serious unwanted sexual experience by responding to a series of questions about their experience. One of these questions was "Would you define this experience as sexual assault?" In total, 62 females reported completed victimization experiences while registered at the University of Alberta. Only 51 females responded to this question, and of these, 11 said the experience was sexual assault, 14 did not know if the experience was sexual assault, and 26 said that the experience was not sexual assault. It is interesting to note that of all the female students who reported on their *most serious* unwanted sexual experience while a student at the University of Alberta, less than one-quarter said their experience was sexual assault. One would expect that more of these "most serious experiences" would fall within the definition of sexual assault. The low number of experiences actually defined as sexual assault begs the question, why did so few cases meet this definition? Is it because these women were reluctant to define their experiences as sexual assault, or were the experiences truly not sexual assault? It is also interesting to note that almost one-quarter of the women did not know if the experience was sexual assault, suggesting that defining an experience as sexual assault is a complicated matter. Why were these women unsure of how to define their experience? What is also surprising is that half of the women said that their most serious unwanted sexual experience was *not* sexual assault. Why did these women not define their experiences as sexual assault? One possible answer to these questions is that these women held different opinions about sexual assault, which would affect how they would define their own experiences.



In order to determine if attitude was associated to definition of experience, a comparison of means was conducted for the three groups of women, those whose experiences were not defined as sexual assault (n=26), those whose experiences were defined as sexual assault (n=11), and those who did not know if their experience was sexual assault (n=14). Table 4-1 shows the results of this analysis. Because the number of female victims in each category was relatively small, caution should be used in generalizing this information. One would assume that females who defined their experience as sexual assault would score the lowest means of all three groups, indicating that they were most likely to reject the myths associated with sexual assault and rape. Correspondingly, one would expect the group that did not define their experiences as sexual assault to score higher than the other groups.

**Table 4-1  
Females' Attitudes by Definition of Experience as Sexual Assault**

Statement	Not SA	Yes SA	DK SA	Statement	Not SA	Yes SA	DK SA
<b>SDS/SS*</b>				<b>Perpetrator</b>			
V364	2.2	3.0	2.9	V390	2.2	1.9	2.2
V371	1.9	2.2	2.7	V401	1.6	1.7	1.7
V362	1.3	1.7	2.0	V402	1.3	1.5	1.7
V363	1.3	1.7	2.0	V395	1.1	1.3	1.1
V388	1.6	1.5	1.3				
V400	2.0	2.3	1.6				
V404	1.6	1.8	2.3				
<b>Force</b>				<b>Victim</b>			
V383	1.4	1.5	1.2	V389	1.5	1.4	1.6
V386	1.1	1.1	1.0	V393	1.2	1.4	1.4
V397	1.3	1.2	1.5	V394	1.2	1.3	1.5
V396	1.1	1.3	1.1	V399	1.0	1.0	1.2
V384	1.4	1.6	1.2	V398	1.0	1.0	1.1
V403	2.0	2.6	1.6	V392	1.4	1.4	1.2
				V391	2.0	2.0	1.2

There does not appear to be any specific pattern of scores between the three groups. In looking at the mean scores, one would assume that the substantial mean differences between the three groups on 10 of the 24 statements would indicate that the groups hold significant differences of opinions on the issue of sexual assault and rape. A Tukey-B test of significance, conducted to determine which of the mean differences were significant, revealed that only one statement showed significant differences between the groups of females, V403, "In order to call a sexual situation sexual assault, force must be used." Females who did not define their experience as sexual assault were significantly and substantially (1.0 higher) more likely than females who did not know how to define their experience to agree with this statement. This significant finding may be an important clue to the differences in interpretation of experiences as sexual assault. Females who did not define their experiences as sexual assault were more likely than females who did not know how to define their experiences to believe that sexual assault is defined by force. According to these results, the "no" females would be less likely than the "don't know" females to identify less overt forms of coercion as sexual assault.

What is particularly important in these results is that, with the one important exception, no attitudinal differences existed between the three groups of women. Since attitudinal differences did not play a large role in the women's definitional differences, perhaps something about the experiences themselves rather than the women's attitudes affected how they defined their experiences.

## QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THREE GROUPS OF FEMALE VICTIMS

The women who reported unwanted sexual experiences while registered at the University of Alberta were asked to provide information about their most serious unwanted sexual experience by answering a series of questions about the experience. A comparison of quantitative responses of the three groups of women, those who said their experience was not sexual assault ("no" women, n=11), those who said the experience was sexual assault ("yes" women, n=15), and those who did not know ("dk" women, n=26), revealed some interesting results. Because of the small number of cases in each group, especially in the "yes" and "dk" groups, caution is urged in generalizing the results to the population.

### Age

Students were asked to provide their ages in the first part of the questionnaire. For ease of analysis, students ages were grouped in three categories, ages 17 to 19, 20 to 24, and 25 and older. In general, women who didn't know how to define their experience tended to be younger than the other two groups of women. Almost half (43%) of the "dk" women were 19 years of age or younger, compared to only 18% of "no" women and 9% of "yes" women. There appears to be a correlation between age and ability to identify an experience as sexual assault. This finding is consistent with the literature, which suggests that younger women represent the highest risk age group for sexual victimization (Koss, 1988).

### Relationship

Students were asked several questions to determine their relationship to the aggressor. First, they were asked how many people were involved in the experience as aggressors. In all cases but one, only one other person was involved. It is interesting to note that the one case involving five or more aggressors was *not* defined as sexual

assault. It is not clear why this is the case, which suggests that further investigation is warranted.

Next, students were asked the gender of the aggressor, and if more than one person was involved, what was the genders of those persons. In all cases, including the case with multiple aggressors, males were the aggressors. Students were also asked what the relationship of the aggressor was to them, and response categories included stranger, nonromantic acquaintance, date, romantic acquaintance, spouse and person in a position of authority.

To compliment the previous question, students were also asked to indicate how well they knew the aggressor, with responses ranging from never knew before the experience, knew slightly, knew moderately well, knew very well, and knew extremely well. This combination of questions provided further insight into the relationship between aggressor and victim than could be had with only one of the questions. For example, none of the women said that their experience occurred with a stranger, but three women said the experience occurred with someone they never knew before the experience.

It is interesting to note that none of the women said that their experience occurred with strangers, and very few women, one "no" and two "dk," said that they never knew the aggressor before the experience, indicating that very few cases involved people not known to the women. This is surprising since the stereotype of sexual assault is an attack by a stranger, yet none of the women who reported an experience labelled as sexual assault reported this type of experience.

Approximately half of the "yes" women (46%) and one-third of the "dk" women (36%) said their experience occurred with someone they knew only slightly, compared to only 14% of "no" women. There appears to be a correlation between relationship and ability to define an experience as sexual assault. Women who said their experience was

not sexual assault were more likely than "dk" women to experience unwanted sex with someone they knew, and "dk" women were more likely to experience this than "no" women. When asked about their relationship to the aggressor, "dk" women were relatively evenly divided (one-third in each category) between experiences with nonromantic acquaintances, romantic acquaintances and dates, while "yes" women were more likely to experience their unwanted sex with a nonromantic acquaintance (46%), and "no" women were more likely to experience their unwanted sex with a romantic acquaintance (54%). One "dk" woman reported her experience occurring with a man in a position of authority, yet she did not know if the experience was sexual assault. Again, it is not clear from this information why this should be the case, and again, this requires further investigation.

According to these findings, there does appear to be a link between relationship and definition of an unwanted sexual experience as sexual assault. Women who defined their experience as sexual assault were more likely to experience unwanted sex with someone they did not know well such as a nonromantic acquaintance, and women who did not define their experience as sexual assault were more likely to experience unwanted sex with someone they knew well such as a romantic acquaintance. Women who did not know how to define their experience were also more likely to experience unwanted sex with someone they didn't know well, but the experiences also occurred within a wide variety of relationships, with nonromantic acquaintances, romantic acquaintances and with dates. These findings are consistent with the literature, which suggests that the closer the relationship, the less likely the victim is to identify coercive sex as sexual assault (White & Humphrey, 1991; Jenkins & Dambrot, 1987). It is possible that the "no" women were reluctant to define their experiences as sexual assault because the experiences occurred with someone they knew.

## Previous Sex

Students were asked how many times they had experienced *unwanted* sex with the aggressor before the experience, and were able to indicate if this had never occurred to them, occurred only once before, twice before, three times before, four times before or five or more times before. Students were also asked about the highest level of consensual sex they had previously engaged in with the aggressor, with response categories of no previous consensual sex, sex play, sex acts, sexual intercourse.

It is interesting to note that about half of the "yes" and "dk" women, and one-quarter of the "no" women did not respond to these questions about previous sex, suggesting that they may have found the questions offensive or intrusive. Recall that the number of cases in each group of women was relatively small to begin with and with the nonresponse rate, extreme caution is urged in generalizing the results.

Of those women who responded to the question about previous unwanted sex with the aggressor, 80% of the "yes" women said that they had never experienced previous unwanted sex, compared to about half of "no" (47%) and "dk" (56%) women. It appears that "no" and "dk" women were more likely to have experienced unwanted sex at the hands of a previous aggressor. It is possible that the previous experiences with unwanted sex is also an indicator of their higher tolerance for unwanted sex and their reluctance to define the experiences as sexual assault.

Of the women who responded to the question about previous consensual sex, only one "yes" woman, one "no" woman and two "dk" women said that they had never engaged in consensual sex with the aggressor before. While it is difficult to draw conclusions because of the large number of women who did not respond to this question, it appears that very few cases involved first-sex experiences.

Two-thirds (69%) of the "no" women said that they had previously engaged in consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse, compared to half of the "dk" women (50%) and less than half the "yes" women (43%). This is not a surprising finding given the previous information about the relationship of the women to the aggressors. Recall that "no" women were more likely to know their aggressor. These results indicate that "no" women were also more likely to engage in higher levels of sex (sexual intercourse) with the aggressor than the other two groups. Again, however, because of the low number of cases in each group, caution should be used in the interpretation of these results. As a whole, it appears the "no" women were more likely to know their aggressor and to have engaged in previous nonconsensual sex and higher levels of consensual sex than the other two groups of women. This confirms the literature, which suggests that relationship is a mitigating factor in defining sexual coercion as sexual assault.

Women who did define their experiences as sexual assault were less likely to know the aggressor, less likely to have experienced previous unwanted sex, and less likely to have engaged in higher levels of consensual sexual activity. Women who did not define their experiences as sexual assault were more likely to know the aggressor well, to have engaged in consensual and nonconsensual sex prior to the experience, and to have engaged in higher levels of sexual behaviour.

### **Intoxicants**

In order to determine the extent of intoxicants in the unwanted sexual experiences, students were asked two questions about their own and the other person(s) use of intoxicants during the experience. Responses categories for both questions included no use of intoxicants, use of alcohol, use of illegal drugs, or use of both alcohol and drugs. Analysis for these questions focused on a dichotomous response of yes or no, and the questions were recoded to reflect this dichotomous choice.

It is interesting to note that intoxicants play an significant role in many unwanted sexual situations. Half of the "dk" (50%) women said that they were using intoxicants, compared to about one-third of the "yes" (36%) and "no" (39%) groups. Thus, it appears that women who did not know if the experience was sexual assault were more likely to have experienced unwanted sex involving intoxicants. It is possible that the use of intoxicants was a mitigating factor in the inability to identify an unwanted sexual experience as sexual assault. The literature suggests that women who use intoxicants are more likely to be blamed and to blame themselves for the experience because of the "differential meanings ascribed to men and women who drink" (Harney & Muehlenhard, 1991: 167).

When asked if the other person(s) used intoxicants, half of "yes" (50%) and "dk" (50%) women reported that the aggressor was using intoxicants, compared to 41% of "no" women. These differences are quite small, suggesting that there is little connection between aggressors' intoxicant use and the definition of an experience as sexual assault. These results do reveal that intoxicant use is prevalent among both victims and aggressors in unwanted sexual experiences.

## **Consent**

Victims were asked if they had given consent for sex and then changed their minds during their unwanted sexual experience. There does not appear to be any pattern among the three groups of women. Most women reported that this was not the case, and about 20% said that they had given consent and then changed their minds. It is interesting to note that even though some women said that they changed their mind during sex, they did not define this experience as sexual assault, while others did. Again, it is no clear why some women labelled this type of experience as sexual assault and others did not or did not know if it was sexual assault. This is another area that requires further investigation.



## **Clarity That Sex Was Not Wanted**

Respondents were asked to indicate on a five point scale ranging from not at all, a little, somewhat, quite a bit and very much, how clear they were that they did not want sex. It is interesting to note that "no" women were less likely to indicate that they were very or quite clear (33%) compared to about half of the "yes" women (55%) and three-quarters of the "dk" women (77%). It makes sense that "yes" women were more clear than "no" women, but it is unclear why "dk" women were more likely to indicate that they were so clear that they did not want sex, and yet they were unable to define their experience as sexual assault. It may be that women's ability to make themselves clear that they did not want sex has little to do with their ability to define the experience as sexual assault.

It is also interesting to note that about one-quarter of the "no" women said that they were not at all or only a little clear that they did not want sex, compared to 9% of "yes" women and none of the "dk" women. It is possible that something about the "no" women's experience with unwanted sex makes their experiences different from the other two groups of women. It is clear that the "no" women are less clear that they did not want sex, and yet they do not define their experience as sexual assault. Perhaps because the "no" women's experiences occurred with someone they knew and had previously engaged in consensual and nonconsensual sex, their lack of clarity in not wanting sex is an indicator of the complexity of existing relationships. Again, this is an area that requires further investigation.

## **Aggressiveness of Other Person**

Students were asked to indicate how aggressive the other person was using the same five point scale mentioned above. Approximately one-third of the "no" women (33%) said that the other person was not at all aggressive, compared to 7% of the "dk"

women and none of the "yes" women. In fact, "yes" women were more likely (64%) to say that the other person was quite or very aggressive compared to only 15% of "no" and 14% of "dk" women.

There appears to be a clear relationship between perceived level of aggression of the other person and ability to define an experience as sexual assault. It is interesting to note that 15% of the "no" women said that the aggressor was very or quite aggressive, yet they did not define their experience as sexual assault. About half (52%) of "no" and three-quarters (79%) of the "dk" women said that the aggressor was a little or somewhat aggressive. It appears that the more aggressive the other person is, the more likely the experience is to be labelled sexual assault. Thus, aggressiveness may be a mitigating factor in the ability to define an unwanted sexual experience as sexual assault. This finding is consistent with the literature, which suggests that lower levels of coercion may not be considered sexual assault, but are accepted as normative instead (Muehlenhard & Schrag, 1991). The stereotypical image of a sexual assault as an aggressive act may prevent many women from identifying lesser forms of coercion as sexual assault.

### **Strategies Used**

Students were asked to indicate what strategies were used to obtain the unwanted sex. Students were asked to choose which strategies they encountered during their unwanted sexual experiences from a list of ten strategies. The ten strategies were combined and ranked ranging from least coercive to most coercive, as shown in Table 4-2. For example, three separate strategies using verbal strategies to obtain sex, threats to end the relationship, false information, and continual arguments, were combined into one category called verbal strategies.

**Table 4-2  
Categorization of Strategies**

During this University of Alberta experience, the person had sex with you even though you did not want sex at that time because:	
Arousal	The person was so sexually aroused you couldn't stop them
Verbal	The person overwhelmed you with continual arguments and convinced you to have sex even though you did not want to
	The person gave you false information to get you to have sex with them (eg. they said they loved you, etc.)
	The person threatened to end your relationship if you didn't have sex with them at that time
Authority	The person used their position of authority over you to coerce you to have sex
Intoxication	You were too drunk or stoned to resist
Threat	The person threatened you with physical force and or a weapon (eg. the person threatened to hold you down or hit you)
Force	The person used physical force and/or a weapon on you but you weren't severely hurt (eg. the person held you down or hit you and/or used a knife etc. You weren't hurt at all or you suffered minor cuts and/or bruises)
	The person used physical force and/or a weapon on you and you were severely hurt (eg. the person held you down or hit you and/or used a knife etc. You were wounded or maimed)
Other	Other

The ranking of strategies is relatively arbitrary since coercion is a subjective and personal experience. This is proven by the students' ranking of their own multiple experiences from least to most serious. In one case a person chose as less serious an experience in which force was used to obtain sex play over another experience in which "other" was used to obtain sex play (ID747). In another case a woman chose an experience involving sexual arousal and force as more serious than one involving sexual arousal, force, threats, use of position of authority and "other" (ID985).

Because students were able to indicate if multiple strategies were used, it was difficult to rank the experiences of the three groups of women. In order to simplify this task, a decision was made to use the most serious strategy (according to the ranking shown in Table 4-2) as the identifier for the experience. For example, a woman reporting an experience involving arousal, verbal strategies, and intoxication would have

her experience identified by the more serious strategy, intoxication. "Other" is more difficult to rank since it is difficult to determine what "other" would include, and so this strategy is left to the last and is not ranked with the others.

A comparison of the three groups according to strategies shows a clear pattern. One-third (36%) of the "yes" women said that their experience involved some level of force, compared to 20% of the "dk" women and none of the "no" women. Women who defined their experience as sexual assault were more likely than other women to have experienced forced unwanted sex. Almost one-quarter of the "dk" women said that force was used but they were still unsure if the experience should be defined as sexual assault. None of the women who said their experience was not sexual assault experienced forced unwanted sex.

Taken in combination with the previous findings about level of aggression of the aggressor, these results show that force was indeed a mitigating factor in the ability to identify unwanted sex as sexual assault. It appears that experiences that met the stereotypical image of sexual assault, forced sex by an aggressive man, were indeed more easily identified as sexual assault. Cases which did not meet this image were either not defined, or were less easily identified, as sexual assault. Recall the previous analysis of attitudes that revealed that women who said that their experience was not sexual assault were significantly more likely than "dk" women to agree that "In order to call a sexual situation sexual assault, force must be used." It is clear that, for this population of victimized women, when force is used, it is often, but not always, identified as sexual assault.

It is interesting to note that two-thirds of the experiences defined as sexual assault did not involve force but instead less coercive strategies, suggesting that a wide variety of experience may be defined as sexual assault. The majority of experiences of "yes" women involved "other" as the coercive strategy. Again, it is difficult to determine what "other" entails, but it could include experiences that occurred so quickly they were over

before the women had a chance to react, such as an unwanted touch or kiss. Only one "yes" woman reported that she was too drunk or stoned to resist the unwanted sex, one reported verbal coercion and one reported arousal as the coercive strategy. Again, in cases defined as sexual assault, most involved either force or "other."

While almost one-quarter of the "dk" women said that they experienced unwanted sex because of force, one-third (33%) experienced unwanted sex involving intoxication as the coercive strategy. Recall that 50% of "dk" women said that they had been using intoxicants during the experience. Given this information, it appears that alcohol use is a mitigating factor in identifying a sexually coercive experience as sexual assault. These women may be reluctant to identify these experiences as sexual assault because they have internalized society's victim blaming myths about women's responsibility for their assaults. These cases should meet the legal definition of sexual assault, yet these women do not know if the experience should be defined as such. Again, this is an area that requires further investigation.

Approximately one-quarter (27%) of the "dk" women also said that they experienced unwanted sex as a result of verbal coercion, compared to only 9% of "yes" women and 19% of "no" women. Perhaps this lesser form of coercion was less readily identified as sexual assault since it did not meet the stereotypical image of sexual assault. As the literature suggests lesser forms of sexual coercion are less easily identified as sexual assault, and as such victims are less capable of protecting themselves from this form of coercion. This may explain the inability of these "dk" women to identify their experiences as sexual assault.

Almost half (46%) of the "no" women said that their experience involved "other" as the most severe form of coercion, with the remaining strategies divided between arousal (11%), verbal coercion (19%) and intoxication (15%). Again, the cases involving intoxication should probably be identified as sexual assault, yet they are not, making this an area which requires further investigation. Also requiring further

investigation are the cases of the one "no" woman who reported threats as the reason she had unwanted sex, and another "no" woman who said she had unwanted sex because another person used a position of authority to coerce her, yet neither identified these experiences as sexual assault. The majority of "no" women experienced unwanted sex because of "other" and, again, it is not clear what "other" entails. These cases may include the seduction as suggested by the Struckman-Johnson's (1994), the person may have simply had sex by ignoring the victim's protests (Berger et al., 1986), or the sex may have been so fleeting, an unwanted touch or kiss, that there was no time to resist or protest. It is interesting that so many of the "no" women's experiences involved this form of coercion. Again, more information is required to explain why these experiences were defined as they were.

It is also important to note that these findings were based on indicators of sexual coercion as defined by only the most serious form of coercion. Many cases involved multiple forms of coercion, which may or may not have had an affect on the definition of the experience as sexual assault. Again, this is an area which requires further investigation.

### **Physical Harm**

Students were asked to indicate if they had experienced any physical harm during the experience, and response categories ranged from not at all, a little, somewhat, quite a bit and very much. It is interesting to note that none of the "no" women said that they experienced any physical harm, compared to 20% of the "yes" women and, surprisingly, 36% of the "dk" women. It is interesting to note that "no" women experienced unwanted sex because of lesser forms of coercion and none experienced unwanted sex. It is clear that these experiences are different from those of the other two groups of women.

Of the women who did experience physical harm, none reported being hurt quite a bit or very much. Instead, the physical harm was moderate. In spite of the lower level of physical harm, it is not clear why "dk" women are reluctant to define their experiences as sexual assault when one-third resulted in physical harm. Recall that most "dk" women indicated that the aggressor was only moderately aggressive, yet a good number of these women came away with physical harm. Perhaps this group of women show most clearly the difficulty women have in identifying experiences as sexual assault. Even in the face of physical harm, they do not know if the experience should be called sexual assault. It is interesting to note that 80% of the "yes" women said that they did not experience any physical harm even though many (36%) of their experiences involved force. This shows that force and harm are not always required to identify an experience as sexual assault, a finding that challenges the stereotype of sexual assault.

### **Sex Obtained During Unwanted Sexual Experience**

Students were asked to indicate the highest level of sex obtained during their most serious unwanted sexual experience, with response categories of sex play, sex acts, or sexual intercourse.

Approximately two-thirds of "yes" (64%) and "no" (62%) women said that the experience went as far as sexual intercourse, compared to only 52% of "dk" women. It is possible that "dk" women were reluctant to identify their experience as sexual assault because the experiences did not involve sexual intercourse. Instead, almost half of the "dk" women's experiences involved sex acts (26%) or sex play (20%), compared to one-third of "yes" and "no" women. One-third of the women who said their experience was not sexual assault experienced sex play, which may be one reason that they did not define their experiences as sexual assault. The stereotype of sexual assault suggests that sexual intercourse is required in order to define an experience as sexual assault. It is possible that "no" women did not regard unwanted touching or kissing as sexual assault, especially when combined with lower levels of coercion and lower levels of aggression.

Again, it appears that many of the experiences of "no" women were different from those of the other two groups of women. It also appears that level of sex was a mitigating factor in defining an experience as sexual assault. The lower levels of sexual activity may contribute to the inability of women to identify their experiences as sexual assault, yet one-third of women who defined their experience as sexual assault said that they experienced the lower levels of sexual behaviour. This information points to the complexity of unwanted sexual behaviour and raises as many questions as it answers.

### **Resistance**

Respondents were asked how they responded to the unwanted sexual experience. They were offered eight different questions with a yes/no response category. Students were asked if they (a) did nothing, (b) turned cold, (c), reasoned, pleaded, quarrelled, (d) cried or sobbed, (e) screamed for help, (f) ran away, (g) physically struggled, (h) became aroused. These questions can be grouped into passive resistance (a & b), verbal resistance (c, d, & e), active resistance (f & g), and arousal (h).

"DK" women were more likely (50%) than the other two groups of women, 43% "no" and 27% "yes," to indicate that they did nothing during the experience. Given the higher number of "dk" women who said that their experience involved intoxication where they were too drunk or stoned to be resist, this finding is not surprising. Most of the "yes" women (90%) said that they turned cold during the experience, compared to two-thirds of the "dk" women (69%), and only one-third of the "no" women (39%). Again, it appears that the "no" women's experiences were different from the other women's experiences, as shown in their response to the aggressor. This form of response, turning cold, appears to be a common one, and one likely easily missed or ignored by aggressors, especially considering the role that the sexual double standard and sex scripts have to play in sexual interactions.



"Yes" women were more likely than the other two groups of women to use verbal resistance. Almost half of the "yes" women (46%) said that they reasoned, pleaded or quarrelled with the aggressor, compared to one-third (29%) of the "no" and "dk" (33%) women. About one-third (36%) of the "yes" women said that they cried or sobbed during the experience, compared to only 7% of the "no" women and 15% of the "dk" women. None of the women screamed for help. It is interesting that "yes" women used more verbal responses than the other two groups of women. It appears that "yes" women were more likely than the other two groups of women to use verbal resistance during their experiences.

Almost one-third of the "yes" women (30%) said that they ran away compared to one "no" woman and none of the "dk" women. However, "dk" women were more likely (62%) than the other two groups of women (18% "no" and 46% "yes") to say that they physically struggled during the experience, which may explain the higher numbers of "dk" women who experienced physical harm from the experience. Again, it is interesting to note that even though many "dk" women physically struggled during their experience, they did not know if the experience was sexual assault. It is also clear that "yes" women used active resistance in their response to their experience. The active resistance fits with the stereotype of sexual assault, which reinforces the question about "dk" women's ability to define their experiences as sexual assault.

Perhaps most telling of all the response strategies is the one asking students if they became aroused during the experience. While none of the "yes" or "dk" women responded this way, 18% of the "no" women said that they became aroused during the experience. Although sexual arousal during a sexual assault or an unwanted sexual experience does not necessarily indicate that the person enjoyed the experience, this information does provide further insight into the dynamics of the experience. Again, it appears that the "no" women's experiences with unwanted sex was different from that of the other two groups, and as such, may explain why these experiences were not defined as sexual assault. Again, this is an area that requires further investigation.

In general, it appears that "yes" women use more types of resistance than the other two groups of women. Yet, with the exception of screaming, the women indicated a wide variety of responses, regardless of how they defined their experiences, which challenges the stereotype of sexual assault.

### **Effect of Response on Other**

Students were asked to indicate how they thought their response affected the aggressor. They were able to indicate if the aggressor stopped as a result of the response, became less aggressive, had no effect on the aggressor, became more aggressive, or had some other effect. Students were also able to indicate if they didn't know what the aggressors' response was, as would be the case if the victim ran away from the experience.

In approximately 20% of the cases for all three groups of women, the aggressor stopped as a result of their resistance. "No" women (22%) were also more likely than the other two groups of women (one woman in each group) to have the man become less aggressive. It appears that "no" women, again, have different experiences compared to other two groups of women. About a third of women reported that their response had no effect on the man, especially in the case of "dk" women (43%), compared to 36% "yes" and 33% "no." This is particularly interesting given the fact that most "yes" women said that the man was quite or very aggressive, and few "no" and "dk" women replied this way. In addition, "yes" women were more likely (27%) to indicate that the aggressor became more aggressive, compared to only 7% of "no" women and 14% of "dk" women. It appears that "yes" women encounter aggressive men and their responses appear to have little effect on the man.

## Later Sexual Involvement

Students were asked to indicate if they *willingly* engaged in sex with the person after the unwanted sexual experience. This question offered only a yes/no response. It is interesting that while many women refused to answer the previous questions about prior sex with the aggressor, most answered this question.

About half of the "no" (50%) and "dk" (46%) women and almost three-quarters (70%) of the "yes" women did *not* willingly engage in consensual sex again. It appears that in many cases, the unwanted sexual experience ended any further consensual sex, indicating that the experience was serious enough to end a sexual relationship.

It is interesting to note, however, that more than one-quarter of the "yes" women said that they did willingly engaged in sex with the aggressor again, even though they defined the experience as sexual assault. It is not clear why this is the case. It is also interesting to note that almost half of the other two groups also said that they willingly engaged in sex with the aggressor after the experience. While it is not clear why the "yes" women would engage in consensual sex after an experience labelled sexual assault, this finding does challenge the stereotype of sexual assault and hints at the complexity of the experience. It possible that the other two groups of women engaged in consensual sex after the experience because they did not define the experience as sexual assault, or were not sure that the experience was sexual assault. It appears that in these cases the sexual relationships continued. Again, this adds further evidence that "no" women's experiences were different from the other groups of women.

## **Effect of Experience on Victims**

Respondents were asked four questions about the effect of the experience on them, including how traumatic the experience was for them, if they were scared during the experience, if they were angry during the experience, and if they regretted the experience. Students were able to respond to the four questions using a five point scale ranging from not at all, a little, somewhat, quite a bit and very much.

### Trauma

While one-third (33%) of the "no" women said that the experience was not at all traumatic, none of the "dk" women and only one "yes" woman responded this way. Again, this shows that "no" women's experiences were different from those of the other two groups of women. About half of the "yes" women (46%) and "no" women (52%) said that the experience was only a little or somewhat traumatic, compared to two-thirds (64%) of the "dk" women. The higher numbers of "dk" women who rated the experience as only moderately traumatic may explain why these women are not sure if the experience is sexual assault. The stereotype suggesting that sexual assault should be a traumatic experience may explain the difficulty "dk" women have in identifying their experiences as sexual assault if they judge their experiences to be only moderately traumatic. It is possible that their real life experiences don't match the stereotype of sexual assault and this may affect how they label their own experiences. In marked contrast, about half (46%) of the "yes" women said that the experience was quite a bit or very much traumatic, compared to only 15% of "no" women and about one-third of the "dk" women (36%).

It is clear that women who defined their experience as sexual assault were more likely judge the experience as traumatic. It appears that the rating of trauma in an unwanted sexual experience is related to the ability to define it as sexual assault.

## Fear

Students were also asked how scared they were during the experience. Again, a marked difference appears between the three groups of women on this question. While about two-thirds (59%) of the "no" women said that they were not at all scared during the experience, only one "dk" woman answered this way. What is surprising, however, is that about half (46%) of the "yes" women also said that they were not at all scared during the experience, which is contrary to the stereotypical image of sexual assault. Again, the high percentage of "no" women reporting that they were not at all scared is evidence that their unwanted sexual experiences were different from the other two groups of women. In comparison, more than one-quarter (27%) of "yes" and "dk" (29%) women said that they were quite or very scared during the experience, compared to only one "no" woman. Again, it is clear that the "no" women's experience with unwanted sex is different from the other two groups of women. Most "dk" women (64%) responded that they were only moderately scared during the experience, a factor which may contribute to their inability to define their experience as sexual assault.

## Anger

A similar pattern emerges for the question asking students how angry they were during the experience. One-third (30%) of the "no" women said that they were not at all angry during the experience, compared to none of the "yes" women and only one "dk" woman. In contrast, 80% of the "yes" women said that they were quite or very angry during the experience, compared to half (50%) of the "dk" women and only one-quarter of the "no" women. It is interesting to note that while many "no" women were only moderately scared during their experience, more were quite or very angry. However, many "dk" women (44%) reported that they were only moderately angry during the experience. Again, their uncertainty in defining their experience as sexual assault may be related to the fact that their experience did not match the stereotypical

image of sexual assault.

### Regret

While 19% of the "no" women said that they did not regret the experience, almost all women expressed some level of regret for the unwanted sexual experience. While most of the "yes" (80%) and "dk" (86%) women said that they regretted the experience quite or very much, only two-thirds (67%) of the "no" women responded this way. It is clear from these high percentages that, in general, women regretted their unwanted sexual experiences, however, "no" women were less likely than the other two groups to regret the experience. Again, these findings suggest that "no" women's experiences are different from the other two groups of women.

### **Responsibility**

Students were asked to rate how responsible they thought they were for the unwanted sexual experiences and how responsible they thought the other person was. Students were asked to respond to these two questions using the same five point scale used in previous questions, ranging from not at all responsible to very responsible. There was little difference between the three groups regarding the women's responsibility for the experience. About half of each of the groups said that they felt very or quite responsible, one-third of each of the groups said that they were moderately responsible, and the remaining women said that they were not at all responsible for the experience. There was a difference between the groups with regard to the assignment of men's responsibility for the experience. All of the "yes" women said the men were quite or very responsible for the experience, compared to about three-quarters of the other two groups of women (70% "no" and 80% "dk"). It appears that "yes" were more likely than the other two groups to hold men highly responsible for the assault.

## SUMMARY

These results have shown that women whose experiences were defined as sexual assault most clearly reflected the stereotypical image of sexual assault. In comparison to the other two groups, women who defined their experiences as sexual assault were more likely to have those experiences with people that they did not know at all or knew only slightly. They were less likely to have engaged in sex with the person before the experience, either consensual or non consensual sex, and to have engaged in consensual sex again with the person after the experience. Their experiences were more likely to occur with someone who was quite or very aggressive, were more likely to have experienced force as the coercive strategy. They were often quite or very clear that sex was not wanted. They were more likely to use many types of responses to the aggression, including active and verbal resistance, and to have this resistance cause the aggressor to become more aggressive. Women who defined their experience as sexual assault were more likely than the other two groups of women to rate the experience as very or quite traumatic, and to have become both scared and angry during the experience. These women also strongly regretted the experience. They were also more likely to hold the men highly responsible for the experience than the other two groups. In general, it is clear that these women's experiences more closely match the stereotypical image of sexual assault.

In contrast, women who said that their experiences were not sexual assault were more likely to have the experience with someone they knew well, and with whom they engaged in consensual sex both before and after the experience. These women were less clear that sex was not wanted. Their partners were less aggressive and used less coercive strategies to get them to have sex. None of these women reported physical harm as a result of the experience. These women were less likely to use active resistance strategies and, in some cases, became aroused as a result of the experience. Their resistance often led to their partner stopping or becoming less aggressive. Women who said their experiences were not sexual assault rated their experiences as less traumatic, and were

less likely to be scared or angry during the experience. While some of these women did not regret their experience, many did.

Again, these findings show very distinct differences between the two groups with regard to their unwanted sexual experiences. Women who did not define their experiences as sexual assault reported experiences that did not meet the stereotypical image of sexual assault. It is interesting to note however, that some of these women had experiences that would appear to meet the legal definition of sexual assault, yet they did not define their experience as such. The reason for this is not clear and this is an area that requires further investigation.

Perhaps the most interesting group are those women who did not know if their experience was sexual assault. In general, they tended to be younger than the other two groups of women. They were also less likely to know the person they had the experience with. Their experiences were also more likely than the other two groups to involve alcohol and they were more likely to experience intoxication as a coercive strategy. They were more clear than the other two groups that they did not want sex, and their experiences were often with men who were only moderately aggressive, yet they were more likely to experience physical harm as a result of the experience. In response to the experience, they were most likely to turn cold and to physically struggle during the experience. In most cases their response had no effect on the aggressor or caused him to become more aggressive. They were more likely to rate their experiences as only moderately traumatic, and to report that they were only moderately scared. Most strongly regretted the experience.

Perhaps the combination of younger age, the involvement of alcohol, and the moderate levels of aggression are what caused these women to be unsure if their experiences were sexual assault. It is clear that their experiences do not match the stereotypical image as closely as do those experiences of women who defined them as sexual assault. It is possible that the stereotypical image of sexual assault prevents these



women from identifying their coercive experiences as sexual assault. In particular, the involvement of alcohol may cause these women to blame themselves. What is of particular interest, however, is that one-third reported physical harm as a result of the experience, which may have come from the larger percentage who reported physically struggling during the experience. Despite the obvious physicality of their experiences, these women still did not know if their experience was sexual assault. It appears that many of these experiences would meet the legal definition of sexual assault, yet these women are unable to identify them as such. It is possible that the stereotypical image of sexual assault prevents these women from identifying these coercive experiences as sexual assault.

While the quantitative analysis answered many questions about the differences in the experiences of the three groups of women, it produced as many questions as it answered. For example, contrary to the stereotypical image of sexual assault, the women who did define their experience as sexual assault reported experiences that did not match this image. For example, some of these women knew their aggressors well, some had prior and later sex with them, not all coercive strategies involved force, not all women actively resisted, not all women reported the experience as very traumatic or reported that they were very scared or angry. It would be interesting to explore these findings more fully to draw out the complexity of experiences that occur within the definitional boundaries of sexual assault.

It also appears that women who did not define their experience as sexual assault had experiences that least closely matched the stereotypical image of sexual assault. Yet these experiences also offer a wide variety of factors, including some that one would think should meet the legal definition of sexual assault. Again, this remains an area that requires further investigation.

Perhaps most interesting are those women whose experiences appear to meet the legal definition of sexual assault, yet are not defined as such. Why is this the case? The quantitative analysis revealed a wide variety of experiences among and within the three groups. While a glimpse of this variety was offered in the quantitative analysis, a clearer picture is possible. A different type of analysis may offer some insights into the questions raised and may more clearly reveal the nuances of these complex experiences. While it is not possible to compare students' actual experiences from data gathered in this study, it is possible to recreate an image or vignette of each individual victimization experience for each of the students who reported unwanted sexual experiences, as victims or aggressors, while at the University of Alberta.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **VIGNETTE ANALYSIS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

"Empirical analytic methods cannot help us know the phenomenological experience of a beautiful sunset, nor can we know the phenomenological experience of a rape survivor using traditional research paradigms. Conversely, subjective reports shed little light on the incidence and prevalence of sexual assault" (White & Farmer, 1992: 45-46). Vignette research has long been used to measure normative beliefs about the world (Finch, 1987).

The empirical study of beliefs, values, and norms has always posed some of the most difficult methodological questions for sociology. These problems are not merely technical, but reach to the heart of theoretical and philosophical questions about the relationship of individuals to social structures, the extent to which human action can be assumed to reflect a world view (and if so, whether this can be verbalised), and in what ways human actions are shaped by cultural prescriptions or ideological forces (Finch, 1987: 105).

Typical vignette research utilizes "short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances," which "allow for features of the context to be specified, so that the respondent is being invited to make normative statements about a set of social circumstances rather than to express his or her 'beliefs' or 'values' in a vacuum" (Finch, 1987: 105-106). Vignette research on sexual assault has explored attributions of responsibility, blame, consent, and empathy, justifiability of sexual assault, and the role of stereotypical beliefs in defining sexual assault among both male and female students (Harris & Weiss, 1995; Sheldon-Keller et al., 1994; Warner & Hewitt, 1993; Quackenbush, 1991; Goodchilds et al., 1988; Smith et al., 1988; Coller & Resick, 1987;

Jenkins & Dambrot, 1987; Muehlenhard et al., 1985; Skelton & Burkhart, 1980). In general, students' close- or open-ended responses to questions about the vignette have been used to make assumptions about beliefs, values and norms regarding sexual assault. A similar technique was used by Kahn et al. (1994) who obtained rape scripts from students who were asked to write descriptions of a rape after being given a "detailed, paragraph-long description of a person shopping for groceries" and being told that the researchers were "interested in examples of how people describe a variety of events" (56-57). Ryan (1988) conducted similar work in asking students to provide a written description of a "typical rape" and a "typical seduction." (237).

This study is an attempt to explore the ways in which University of Alberta students' understandings of sexual assault are affected by the stereotypical image of sexual assault. An analysis of their attitudes revealed that students overwhelmingly reject sexual assault and rape myths that are associated with the stereotypical image of sexual assault. An analysis of female victims' aggregate data revealed that women who defined their experiences as sexual assault tended to have experiences that reflected the stereotypical image of sexual assault more so than did the women did not know if the experience was sexual assault and the women who indicated that their experiences were not sexual assault. This study uses a vignette analysis which differs from those described above.

## **THE CREATION OF VIGNETTES**

This study created individual vignettes by reconstructing quantitative data gathered from students' responses to close-ended questions asking about their most serious unwanted sexual experience as a University of Alberta student. Each student who responded to the study as a victim or as an aggressor provided detailed information about their experience by answering a series of questions (as shown in Table 5-1) designed to assess the situational factors associated with their experience. The unit of measurement becomes the individual rather than the group of students.

**Table 5-1**  
**Questions and Response Categories Used in the Creation of the Vignettes**

Question	Response Categories
1. Gender	Male/Female
2. Age	Actual age given
3. Location USE	On Campus: Your u. rez/Their u. rez/Other u. rez/U. bar/U. building/ Fr. t/U. party/Vehicle or parking lot/Other Off Campus: Your home/Their home/Other home/Outdoors/Vehicle, parking lot/Public Place or public transportation/Bar or restaurant/ Workplace/Other
4. When USE occurred	During past month/Last 6 months/Last year/Last 2 years/More than 2 years
5. # people involved	Just one/actual number given (e.g. two others, three others, etc.)
6. Gender involved	Men only/Women only/Men and women/Don't know
7. Sex of main person	Male/Female/Don't know
8. Relationship	Stranger/Non-romantic acquaintance/Casual or first date/Romantic acquaintance/Spouse/Relative/Person with authority over you/Don't know
9. How well known	Never knew before/Slightly/Moderately/Very well/Extremely well/Unsure
10. Prior USE	Never before, once, twice, three times, four times, five or more times before
11. Prior consensual sex	None/Sex play/Sex acts/Sexual intercourse/Don't know
12. Intoxicants (you/other)	No/Alcohol/Drugs/Both alcohol and drugs
13. Consent withdrawn	Yes/No/Don't know
14. Clarity sex not wanted	Not at all/A little/Somewhat/Quite a bit/Very much/Don't know
15. Other aggressive	Not at all/A little/Somewhat/Quite a bit/Very much/Don't know
16. Type(s) of coercion	See Table 2-4
17. Level of sex	Sexual intercourse/Sex acts /Sex play/Don't know
18. Physical harm (you/other)	Not at all/A little/Somewhat/Quite a bit/Very much/Don't know
19. Response to USE	Turn cold/Reason. plead, quarrel/Cry or sob/Scream for help/Run away/ Physically struggle, push them away, hit/Do nothing/Become aroused.
20. Effect of response	They stopped/They became less aggressive/It had no effect on them/They became more aggressive/Other/Don't know
21. Consensual sex after USE	No/Yes/Don't know
22. Traumatic	Not at all/A little/Somewhat/Quite a bit/Very much/Don't know
23. Consider suicide	Yes/No
24. Scared	Not at all/A little/Somewhat/Quite a bit/Very much/Don't know
25. Angry	Not at all/A little/Somewhat/Quite a bit/Very much/Don't know

**Table 5-1 Continued**

Question	Response Categories
26. Regret	Not at all/A little/Somewhat/Quite a bit/Very much/Don't know
27. Responsible (you/other)	Not at all/A little/Somewhat/Quite a bit/Very much/Don't know
28. Reported USF/response	Did not tell/told (family/spouse, partner/residence personnel, roommate/Campus Security/ University Health Services/ Sexual Harassment, Human Rights Office/Student Counselling/Student Help/Faculty Personnel/Local hospital/Local police/ Local crisis intervention centre/Local sexual assault centre/Other person, agency)
29. Define: Sexual Assault	Yes/No/Don't know

Table 5-1 shows the questions used in the creation of the vignette and their respective response categories. The following is a sample vignette and a detailed discussion of how it was created.

(ID515) A 22 year-old female reported an experience that happened in her home, two or more years before the study. The man was a romantic acquaintance whom she knew very well. They had never had unwanted sex before but they had engaged in consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. Neither person was using intoxicants during this experience. She was somewhat clear that sex was not wanted. He was quite aggressive, and used convincing arguments and gave false information to obtain sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the experience by turning cold and doing nothing and her response had no effect on him. She did not willingly engage in sex with him after this incident. She rated the experience as quite traumatic. She was not at all scared but very angry during the experience. She very much regrets the experience. She said that both people were very responsible for the experience. She told only a friend(s) about the experience. She defined the experience as sexual assault.

The first sentence of the vignette, "A 22 year-old female reported an experience that happened in her home, two or more years before the study," was created using the first four questions shown in Table 5-1. Students were asked to indicate their gender, to report their age in years, where the experience occurred (as indicated in Table 5-1), and how long prior to the study the experience had occurred. As seen in this vignette this individual indicated that she was female, that she was 22 years old at the time of the study, that her experience occurred in her own home, and that the experience happened more than two years prior to the study.

The second sentence in the vignette, "The man was a romantic acquaintance whom she knew very well," was constructed using questions 5 through 9 inclusive as listed in Table 5-1. Students were asked to indicate how many people were involved in their experience, the gender of the person(s) involved, and the gender of the main person involved if more than one person was involved. Students were also asked to indicate their relationship to the person involved, and to indicate how well they knew this person using the response categories as shown in Table 5-1. In this case, the young woman indicated that only one person was involved, this lone person was a man, she listed him as a romantic acquaintance, and indicated that she knew him very well.

The third sentence in the vignette, "They had never had unwanted sex before but they had engaged in consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse," was constructed using questions 10 and 11 as listed in Table 5-1. These two questions asked students to indicate the number of times they had encountered prior unwanted sex with the other person, and what was the most sexual intimacy they willingly had with this person with prior to this experience. See Table 5-1 for the response categories for these questions. The woman in this vignette indicated that she had never had prior unwanted sex with this person, but that she had willingly gone as far as sexual intercourse with this man prior to her reported unwanted sexual experience with him.

The fourth sentence in the vignette, "Neither person was using intoxicants" during the experience," was created using three questions which were subsumed under question 12 as listed in Table 5-1. Students were asked to indicate if they used intoxicants during the experience, or if the other person(s) used intoxicants. Response categories are shown in Table 5-1. In this case, neither the woman nor the man were using intoxicants during the experience.

The fifth sentence, "Initial consent was given and then she changed her mind, and she was somewhat clear that sex was not wanted," was created using questions 13 and 14 from Table 5-1. Students were asked to indicate if they had initially given consent

to sex and then changed their minds. Students were also asked how clear they were that sex was not wanted. Response categories for both questions are shown in Table 5-1. In this case the women indicated that she had initially given consent to sex and then changed her mind, and that she was somewhat clear that sex was not wanted.

The sixth sentence in the vignette, "He was quite aggressive, and used convincing arguments and gave false information to obtain sexual intercourse," was taken from questions 15, 16 and 17 in Table 5-1. Students were asked to indicate how aggressive the other person was in the unwanted sexual experience. Students were asked to indicate which of ten coercive strategies were used by the other person to obtain sex. Specifically the question from the questionnaire reads: "The other person had sex with you even though you did not want sex at that time because:" This question was followed by a list of ten different strategies that the other person used to obtain sex. Students were also asked "What was the most sex that occurred during this experience." Response categories for these questions are listed in Table 5-1. In this case, the woman indicated that the man was quite aggressive, and that he used two strategies to obtain sex, convincing arguments, and false information. The woman also indicated that the experience went as far as sexual intercourse.

The seventh sentence in the vignette, "She did not suffer any physical damage," was created from question 18 in Table 5-1. Students were asked to indicate if they suffered any physical damage during the experience, and if they inflicted and physical damage on the other person during the experience. All vignettes indicate the response to the first question, but only indicate the response to the second question if the person did inflict physical damage on the other person. In this case, the woman did not suffer any physical damage during this experience, and the lack of any further information indicates that she did not inflict any damage on the man either.

The eighth statement, "She responded to the experience by turing cold and doing nothing, and her response had no effect on him," was created using questions 19 and 20.



Students were asked to indicate, using a "yes," "no," or "don't know" response to each of the response categories listed in Table 5-1. Students were also asked to indicate what effect their response had on the other person, and again, response categories are shown in Table 5-1. In this case, the woman responded to the man by turing cold and doing nothing, and he response had not effect on the man.

Sentence nine, "She did not willingly engage in sex with him after this incident," was created using question 21 as listed in Table 5-1. Students were asked to indicate if they willingly engaged in sex with the person since the experience, and response categories are seen in Table 5-1. In this case the women did not willingly engage in sex with the man again.

The tenth sentence, "She rated the experience as quite traumatic," was created using question 22, which asked students if the experience was traumatic for them. Again, response categories for this question can be seen in Table 5-1. In this experience, the woman indicated that the experience was quite traumatic. Question 23 was used only for those vignettes in which the student indicated that they had considered suicide as a result of the experience.

The eleventh sentence in the vignette, "She was not at all scared but very angry during the experience," was created using questions 24 and 25 from Table 5-1. Students were asked to indicate how scared they were during the experience, and also to indicate how angry they were during the experience. Response categories are seen in Table 5-1. In this experience the woman indicated that she was not at all scared but very angry during the experience.

The twelfth sentence in the vignette, "She very much regretted the experience," was created using question 26 in Table 5-1. Students were asked if they regretted the experience, and the response categories are found in Table 5-1. In this case, the woman regretted the experience very much.

The thirteenth sentence in the vignette, "She said that both people were very responsible for the experience," was created from two questions which are shown in question 27 of Table 5-1. Students were asked to indicate how much they felt responsible for the experience. Students were also asked how responsible they thought the other person was for the experience. The response categories were similar for both questions, as shown in Table 5-1. In this experience the woman indicated that both she and the man were very responsible for the experience.

The fourteenth statement in the vignette, "She told only a friend(s) about the experience," was created using several questions, which are subsumed under question 28 in Table 5-1. Students were asked to indicate if they told any of fifteen possible people or agencies. The vignettes list only those people or agencies that students indicated that they did tell. In some vignettes, the response of the person or agency was also provided if it was seen to add important information to the vignette. In this case, the young woman told only a friend or friends about the experience, but did not report it to anyone else.

The final statement in the vignette, "She defined the experience as sexual assault," was created using questions 29 from Table 5-1. Students were asked if they considered their experience to be sexual assault. Response categories are shown in Table 5-1. In this case the woman indicated that she considered the experience to be sexual assault.

Male aggressors vignettes differ slightly in construction. Aggressors answered questions that, while similar to those asked of the victims of unwanted sex, were adjusted to reflect the aggressors' position in the experience. For example, the ten coercive strategies were adjusted for aggressors, as shown in Table 2-6 in Chapter 2. Aggressors were asked to indicate if the experience was traumatic for them, if they were scared, or angry, and if they regretted the experience. It is unfortunate that no information was gathered on the aggressors' perceptions of the effect of their actions on the other person (victim) with regard to these factors. Aggressors were able to indicate how their

"victims" responded to the unwanted sex. The aggressors' responses to these questions can be used to create vignettes similar to those of the victims. Again, the vignettes provide a more nuanced picture of aggression for this sample of students.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE VIGNETTES**

The vignettes offer a creative way to gain further insight into the issue of unwanted sex than is possible using quantitative data alone. It also offers a way to determine how the stereotypical image may or may not affect students' abilities to define experiences as sexual assault. Finch suggests that one of the pitfalls of vignettes includes the "technical issues about their construction so that they can be readily followed and understood" (1987: 111). Although Finch was talking about the construction of vignettes so that respondents could easily follow and understand them, the challenge for this use of the vignettes was to construct stories of individual students which reflects their real experiences with unwanted sex. This was an almost impossible task since relationships and sexual behaviour rarely occur in the linear fashion outlined in these vignettes.

The construction of the vignettes is not an exact science and the sequencing of the responses was relatively arbitrary. The first few sentences of the vignette locate the experience in time and space, and give the subjects some context in terms of their relationship to one another. This information is relatively straightforward and easy to understand. The most problematic arrangement of the vignette is in determining the issues of consent, use and level of aggression, response to the aggression, and reaction of the aggressor to the victim's reaction. The choice to arrange the statements representing these issues in the manner chosen does two things: First, it makes the vignettes easier to follow because the sequencing appeals to the stereotypical assumption about how sexual assaults occur. Second, it reinforces this assumption and detracts from the fact that real life experiences rarely reflect this sequencing of events. The remaining sentences in the vignettes provide further information to provide context regarding how

the students' rated and labelled the experience. The vignettes were reconstructed from survey data which offered respondents "a fixed set of choices, none of which may in fact correspond to his or her beliefs" (Finch, 1987: 106). In this way the vignette analysis used in this study is necessarily limited. The "voices" that are heard in the vignettes are not those of the students but those of the researcher trying to draw out the complexity of the issue of sexual assault.

What is problematic in this analysis is that the vignettes may give the appearance of providing a context that is only fictional. For example, the vignettes were arranged according to the victims' consent, the aggressors level of aggression and use of strategies to obtain sex, the victims response to the aggression, and the aggressors' response to the victims' reaction. This implies a logical sequence that may not accurately reflect the real experience the student reported. It is impossible to locate exactly when consent was given, when the victim tried to make it clear that sex was not wanted, when the aggression began, when the strategies were used, when the sex was obtained, when the physical harm was encountered, or when the victim resisted, using the restrictive close-ended responses to the questions asked. Despite these limitations, the vignettes do offer some interesting insights into the unwanted sexual experiences reported by students.

## **ANALYSIS OF THE VIGNETTES**

All vignettes contain consistently ordered responses so that direct comparisons can be made between vignettes. The vignettes in this study offer comparable, and limited contextualized data on individual students' experiences with unwanted sex, which can be used to understand the complexity of this issue, and to explore normative beliefs about sexual aggression and victimization. It is necessary to first offer a comparative basis for the vignettes. The literature suggests that the stereotypical image of sexual assault affects how people determine if an experience should be labelled as sexual assault. Thus, a vignette describing such a situation is offered for comparison.

A 20 year old woman described an experience that occurred outside at a University sponsored event or dance, in the month prior to the study. The man involved was a stranger whom she never knew before the experience. She never engaged in any kind of sexual behaviour with this man before this experience. She did not use any kind of intoxicants and did not know if the man did. She did not provide initial consent and then withdraw it, and she was very clear that she did not want sex. The man was very aggressive, and used physical force, threats, and was so sexually aroused she could not stop him, resulting in sexual intercourse. She was physically damaged during the experience. She responded to the situation by physically struggling, reasoning, pleading or quarrelling, crying or sobbing, screaming for help, and running away. Her resistance caused the man to become more aggressive. She did not engage in sex with the man after the experience. She rated the experience as very traumatic, and indicated that she was very scared and very angry during the experience. She said that she was not at all responsible and that the man was very responsible for the experience. She very much regretted the experience and reported the experience to the local police, Campus Security, the local sexual assault centre and the local hospital, faculty personnel, and told a friend(s) and other person about the experience. She defined the experience as sexual assault.

This vignette portrays a typical sexual assault which occurred outdoors, by a stranger who was very aggressive and who used multiple strategies to obtain sexual intercourse. The woman actively resisted, was physically hurt, was very traumatized by the experience, and reported it to all the proper authorities. It is likely that any woman experiencing such an assault would be likely to identify it as sexual assault.

The following discussion of the vignettes includes female victims (n=52), male victims (n=13), male aggressors (n=12), and female victims (n=2). Although 64 women reported completed victimization experiences, only 52 provided enough information to create the vignettes. Of the 16 victimized males, only 13 were included for analysis because two men did not provide enough information to complete the vignettes, and one man provided contradictory information that indicated that the response was not sincere. This man indicated that he experienced an unwanted sexual experience involving all ten of the coercive strategies, yet he indicated that he did not suffer any physical harm, that the experience was not at all traumatic, and that he did not feel at all scared or angry, nor did he regret the experience. This case illustrates the levity with which some men perceive the issue of unwanted sex. Of the 17 men who reported aggression experiences, five did not provide enough information to complete the vignettes. Both of the women reporting an aggression experience provided enough information to be included in the analysis.

A simple read through these students' vignettes offers many insights, and shows how many do not match this stereotypical image of sexual assault. While this basic information is important in and of itself, a more thorough analysis is required to create a comprehensive picture. This is done by categorizing the vignettes according to the legal definition of sexual assault and by the strategies used in the experiences. Individual cases can be grouped into two categories, those that more easily meet the legal definition of sexual assault and those that less easily meet this definition. For example, cases involving multiple offenders, physical harm, withdrawn consent, force, threats, a position of authority, and/or intoxication would meet the definitional requirements of sexual assault and would be placed into the first category. Experiences which involve unwanted sex because of arousal, verbal strategies, or some "other" strategy are less easily identified as meeting the definition of sexual assault, and these cases are placed in the second category. Many cases involved multiple strategies, and, these cases were ranked according to the most *serious* type of coercion involved in a manner similar to that used in the quantitative analysis of female victims' experiences.

In addition to the vignettes, some students provided qualitative responses which were added included in the analysis to provide even further insight into their experiences. Muehlenhard et al. (1992) suggest that male female relations exist on a continuum from consensual, to coercive, to assaultive. Students in this study were asked if they considered their experience sexual assault, but not if they considered it coercive or consensual. However, the vignettes offer a glimpse of this continuum. The following is a discussion of each of the groupings of vignettes.

## **Vignettes More Easily Defined as Sexual Assault**

Vignettes which involved multiple offenders, withdrawn consent, physical harm, force, threats, a position of authority, or intoxication are considered to have met the definition of sexual assault and are discussed below. Some overlap occurs among the cases with regard to these rankings. For example, a case involving force may also involve the withdrawal of consent. The cases are discussed individually and these overlaps will be evident. The ranking merely facilitates discussion.

According to the general ranking, only one female victimization case involved multiple offenders. Seven female victims reported cases involving force. One female victim reported an experience involving threats. Three female victims and one male aggressor reported cases involving a position of authority. Nine female victims and three male victims reported cases involved intoxication. Three female victims reported cases involving less serious forms of coercion that resulted in physical damage. Five female victims, three male victims and six male aggressors reported cases involving withdrawn consent. In total 42 separate cases were reported that met the legal definition of sexual assault based on the strategies used to obtain sex. All of the cases, except one male-male assault, involved female male sexual interactions. There are some interesting points to make with these results alone.

First, females victims, but no male aggressors or male victims, reported experiences involving physical force or threats. Second, no male aggressors reported experiences involving intoxication or physical harm. Third, more females reported victimization experiences than either male victims or male aggressors. Fourth, no female aggressors reported experiences that fit into this category of legally defined sexual assault experiences. These points alone show that females' reports of unwanted sex are different from those of both male victims and male aggressors. Females are more likely than males to experience unwanted sex because of physical force or harm. There is a discrepancy between females victims' and male aggressors' reports of unwanted sexual

experiences, which may indicate that males are reluctant to report on experiences that could be considered criminal acts, or males may simply identify their experiences as wanted. The following is a discussion of these cases by strategy.

### Multiple Offenders

The legal definition of sexual assault includes any attack of a sexual nature in which some force is used, and/or where more than one offender is involved. Only one female victimization experience was reported involving multiple offenders. No male victims, male aggressors, or female aggressors reported such experiences.

ID467 A 21 year old woman reported an experience that occurred at a University sponsored event or dance, in the six months prior to the study. The experience occurred with five or more men. The main man involved in the event was a nonromantic acquaintance whom she knew only moderately well. She did not use intoxicants during the experience, but the men were drinking. She did not provide information about previous unwanted or consensual sex with the man. She did not provide initial consent and then withdraw it, and she was somewhat clear that she did not want sex. The men were somewhat aggressive, and were so sexually aroused she could not stop them, resulting in sex play. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by physically struggling, and they stopped. She did not engage in sex with the main man after the experience. She rated the experience as not at all traumatic, and indicated that she was not at all scared but a little angry during the experience. She quite regretted the experience and told a friend(s) about the experience. She said that she was not at all responsible and that the man was very responsible. She said the experience was *not* sexual assault.

Because this case involved multiple offenders, and was reported as *unwanted*, theoretically, it should be defined as sexual assault. Instead, it was labelled as *not* sexual assault. What is missing in this analysis is any sense of how this experience may have affected this woman's sense of freedom of movement on campus. It is interesting to note that the young woman was not scared during the experience, and that the experience was not traumatic for her. This case does not appear to be consensual, given the fact that the woman physically struggled in response to the experience and she reported being angry during the experience. Given this information, this experience may be considered coercive. Given the fact that this woman did not report this experience, she may deny



the importance of it by chalking it up to "boys will be boys" behaviour.

In a situation like this it is useful to ask who benefits from this type of behaviour. Certainly the young woman did not appear to benefit from it since she reported it as an unwanted sexual experience which she quite regretted. Given a choice, this young woman probably just as soon not had the experience. It is impossible to determine the motives of the five or more men who were involved in the experience, however, this type of behaviour belies a lack of respect for the basic human right to determine who is allowed to touch one's body. This lack of respect may be anchored in the cultural acceptance of women as sexual objects. It is clear that this young woman's rights were violated in this experience. This type of behaviour can be placed on the continuum of sexual coercion which prevents women from being truly free and autonomous in Canadian society.

### Force

Most people, when asked about forced sex, would agree that it is a criminal act. Yet only four of seven women whose cases involved force defined their experience as sexual assault. The remaining three cases did not know if their experience was sexual assault. Fortunately, no one who experienced forced unwanted sex defined their experience as not sexual assault. No males reported such experiences as either victims or aggressors.

ID #415 A 23 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in the man's home within two years prior to the study. The experience occurred with romantic acquaintance whom she knew extremely well with whom she had engaged in consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. She had never had an unwanted sexual experience with this man prior to this experience. Intoxicants were not involved in the experience. Initial consent was not given and then withdrawn, and she was very clear that she did not want to have sex. He was quite aggressive and used force to get her to have sexual intercourse. She suffered a little physical damage. She responded to the situation by turning cold, reasoning, pleading or quarrelling, crying, and physically struggling. Her response made him stop. She willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was somewhat traumatic and that she was quite scared and very angry during the experience. She very much regretted the experience. She told no one about the experience and did not respond to the question asking if she told her partner (the experience may have occurred with this partner). She did not report the experience to authorities. She felt a little responsible for the experience and said that the man was very responsible. She did not know if this experience was sexual assault.

While this case more closely approximates the stereotypical vignette of sexual assault, given the amount of aggression, the use of force, the clarity that sex was not wanted, and the woman's active resistance, and the physical harm suffered by the woman, this woman was unable to identify this experience as sexual assault. There is evidence of situational factors that may mitigate her ability to identify this forced sex experience as a crime. The relationship, the prior sexual experience with the man, and the fact that he stopped as a result of her resistance may prevent her from identifying this experience as sexual assault. Again, the vignette lacks the context that would be found in a qualitative description of this experience. It is not clear when the sex was obtained, before or after she resisted. However, it is very clear that this was not a consensual experience since the woman rated it as somewhat traumatic, she was very scared and very angry, and she very much regretted the experience. Any situation in which a woman experiences unwanted forced unwanted sex is sexual assault, regardless of the other circumstances involved. It is interesting to note that the woman indicated that she was somewhat responsible for the assault herself, even though she held him very responsible. Although this vignette lacks the context of real life experience, it provides enough information to identify this experience as sexual assault. It also reveals the difficulty that women have in identifying such experiences as assault, despite the fact that Canada has a broad inclusive definition, and despite the fact that victimized women rejected sexual assault myths more than any other group of students on campus. This example clearly illustrates the hiddenness of these types of experiences, especially since this woman did not report this experience to authorities. While this case did not completely match that of the stereotypical vignette, it certainly should be placed at the assaultive end of the continuum.

The information offered in this vignette suggests that further education is required to educate women about what constitutes sexual assault. If women are unable to define such blatant experiences as sexual assault, they will certainly have difficulty defining more subtle forms of coercion as sexual assault. When these crimes go unreported, society assumes that they do not exist. Two other cases involved women who did not

know if their experience was sexual assault. These two cases share some similarities to the one just discussed, but beyond that they differ substantially.

ID438 A woman aged 19 years reported one experience that occurred in a University fraternity more than two years prior to the study (setting this young woman's age at 17). The experience occurred with a date whom she never knew before. No information was provided about previous unwanted or consensual sex, however the fact that these people had not met before suggests that no previous sex of any kind occurred. He was using drugs and alcohol and she was drinking. Initial consent was not given and then withdrawn, and she was very clear that she did not want to have sex. He was quite aggressive and was so sexually aroused she couldn't stop him, he used force, and some "other" strategy to obtain sex acts. She suffered a little physical damage as a result of the experience. She responded to the situation by turning cold, reasoning, pleading or quarrelling, physically struggling, and doing nothing. Her response caused him to stop. No information was provided about further sex with him. She indicated that the experience was quite traumatic, and that she was somewhat scared, and very angry during the experience. She very much regretted the experience. She told her partner and a friend(s) about the experience but did not report it to authorities. She said that she felt somewhat responsible for the experience and he was very responsible. She did not know if this experience was sexual assault.

The young woman in this vignette offered a qualitative response, which provides further context for this experience.

ID438 "While sexual intercourse did not actually occur, the person tried but stopped after I said no several times & struggled. Sexual play occurred which I was not comfortable with but I allowed."

This qualitative response reveals the limitation of the vignettes regarding context. Given the information provided in the vignette and the qualitative response, this experience appears to be a case of attempted rape. The man was quite aggressive, she was very clear that she did not want sex, he used force, she passively, actively and verbally resisted, and she suffered some physical damage.

This case evokes many questions. First, why did this woman engage in sexual behaviour which she allowed but which she did not feel comfortable with? Was her discomfort associated with engaging in sex in general, or was she uncomfortable with this particular man or this particular situation? These are key questions which need to be explored more fully in order to understand women's unwanted sexual experiences. Second, why did this woman have to use so many different types of resistance to make

the man stop? While it is not clear what order the resistance strategies were used, or if they were used simultaneously, this does not appear to be a case where a the woman simply indicated to the man that she did not want sex and he obliged. Instead, this case reveals the ways in which men ignore women's resistance, which reveals the structural and situational factors discussed in the beginning of this thesis.

Third, why was this woman unable to identify this experience as sexual assault? This was clearly not a case of consensual sexual behaviour, she was physically hurt during the experience, she rated the experience as quite traumatic, she was somewhat scared and very angry. Certain structural and situational factors may have prevented this woman from identifying this experience as sexual assault. She was young, she had just met this man, she was drinking, the experience occurred in a fraternity, she allowed certain sexual behaviours to occur, but she did not want to engage in sexual intercourse, the man eventually stopped. The cultural expectation that requires men to be sexually aggressive may have prevented this woman from identifying this behaviour as assaultive. It was clearly coercive. The woman did not report this experience to authorities, which is not surprising given the circumstances of the case. As a result, this experience remains hidden in the realm of normative male female sexual interactions. While many people may be reluctant to identify such an experience as sexual assault, given the structural and situational factors involved, this case reflects the hidden forms of sexual coercion that prevent women from being freely and sexually autonomous. Again, what is missing from this analysis is how this experience affected this woman's sense of autonomy and freedom. This case contributes to the continuum of sexual coercion faced by women.

The next case also involves a woman who was unable to identify her experience as sexual assault.

ID477 A 19 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in her university residence within one year prior to the study. The man was a romantic acquaintance whom she knew extremely well. She did not answer if she had previous unwanted or consensual sex with him. Both people were drinking during the experience. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she made it very clear that she did not want to have sex. He was quite aggressive, and used five strategies to obtain sexual intercourse. He was so aroused she couldn't stop him, he used convincing arguments, gave false information, he used force, and she was too drunk or stoned to resist. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by turning cold, reasoning, pleading or quarrelling, and physically struggling. Her response had no effect on him. She did not answer if she had willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was somewhat traumatic, and that she was somewhat scared, and very angry during the experience. She very much regretted the experience. She told a friend(s), but did not report the experience to authorities. She did not feel at all responsible for the experience but said that he was very responsible. She did not know if this experience was sexual assault.

The woman in this vignette also offered a qualitative response that added further context to the case.

ID477 "I was raped when I was 8 years old by my babysitter (my fathers' best friend's son) and I never told anyone - I think this is what affects my relationships with other men not the experiences asked about in this survey (to a certain extent it does, but only in addition to the problems from before). I'm not consciously aware of this problem during relationships but it definitely does influence me."

Recent feminist research has begun to explore the effects of previous victimizations (Gidycz et al., 1995; Himelein, 1995; Gidycz et al., 1993). Despite the fact that this experience involved physical force, she was too intoxicated to resist, she used passive, verbal, and active resistance strategies, which had no effect on the man, this woman was unable to identify this experience as sexual assault. Again, any unwanted experience involving force *is* sexual assault, regardless of the circumstances. It is clear that this experience was not consensual, and given the woman's rating of the experience as somewhat traumatic and very much regretted, the experience should also be considered coercive. Again, the situational factors involved, her relationship to the man, may have mitigated this woman's efforts to identify this experience as sexual assault.

It is interesting to note that the woman held the man as very responsible and herself not at all. This evokes some important points. First, this woman may understand victim blaming myths well enough to know that women are not responsible in sexual assault situations. However, given that this woman did not identify this experience as sexual assault, this assumption may be wrong. Second, this woman's prior victimization may have robbed her of any sense of responsibility for her own sexual efficacy. Third, this assignment of responsibility may reflect the cultural assumption that men are responsible for sexual interactions. These are key points in understanding sexual coercion, and future Canadian research needs to consider these in assessing the complexity of sexual interactions between women and men.

Because this experience was not reported, it remains hidden from view. This woman's qualitative response adds to formation of the continuum of unwanted sex. Not only was this woman sexually assaulted, she also experienced child sexual abuse.

The previous three cases clearly show the difficulty women have in defining their own sexually coercive experiences as sexual assault. Relationship between victim and aggressor, prior sexual interactions, and/or alcohol use appear to be mitigating factors preventing the identification of these experiences as criminal acts. Despite the fact that these women encountered men who were quite aggressive, who used physical force, that these women were very clear that they did not want sex, that they used multiple and active resistance strategies, and in two cases the women suffered physical harm, these women did not know if their experiences were sexual assault. It appears that there is a gap between these women's experiences and their ability to define them as crimes. This gap is widened when students' attitudes are considered. Recall that of all the statements about sexual assault myths, students rejected the myths associated with the use of force more strongly than other myths, and female victims rejected myths more so than other students. Yet these women were unable to identify their own forced sex experiences as sexual assault. This gap can only be explained by the structural and situational factors that prevent women from identifying their own experiences as assaultive. These cases

clearly reveal the hiddenness of sexual coercion among University of Alberta students. Fortunately, not all women have such difficulty in identifying sexually coercive experiences as sexual assault, as seen in the next four cases.

ID16 A woman aged 23 years, reported an experience that occurred in another person's home two or more years prior to the study. It involved a romantic acquaintance whom she knew slightly, with whom she had engaged in consensual sex play once before, and with whom she had experienced unwanted sex with once before. Both people were drinking during the experience. She did not give initial consent for sex and then change her mind, and she was somewhat clear that sex was not wanted. He was a little aggressive and used five strategies to obtain sexual intercourse. He was so aroused she could not stop him, he used convincing arguments, gave false information, used force and some "other" strategy leading to sexual intercourse. She suffered no physical damage from the force. She responded to the experience by turning cold and doing nothing during the experience. Her response caused him to stop. She did not willingly engage in sex with this person again. She rated the experience as a little traumatic and said that she was somewhat scared and a little angry. She somewhat regretted the experience. She told her partner about the experience but did not report it to the authorities. She indicated that she was quite responsible for the experience and that he was very responsible. She defined the experience as sexual assault.

ID985 A 21 year old woman reported one experience that occurred at a university sponsored event six months previous to the study. He was a non-romantic acquaintance whom she knew slightly and with whom she had never had any previous sexual experience, either consensual or unwanted. He was drinking but she was not using intoxicants. Initial consent for sex was not offered and then withdrawn, and she was quite clear that sex was not wanted. He was quite aggressive, was so sexually aroused she could not stop him, and he used force to obtain sex acts. She suffered some physical damage and inflicted some physical damage on him. She responded to the experience by reasoning, pleading or quarrelling, and by crying, by physically struggling, and she ran away. Her responses only made him more aggressive. She did not willingly engage in sex with this person again. She indicated that the experience was very traumatic, and that she was very scared during the experience. She did not know if she was angry during the experience. She considered suicide as a result of the experience. She very much regretted that the experience happened. She told her partner, her friends and some other person about the experience but did not report the experience to authorities. She said that both people were very responsible for the experience. She defined this experience as sexual assault.

ID70 A 21 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in her home two or more years before the study. The experience occurred with a date whom she knew slightly and with whom she had never had unwanted sex, but with whom she had engaged in consensual sex going as far as sex play. She was not using intoxicants and did not know if he was. No initial consent for sex was given and then withdrawn, and she was very clear that sex was not wanted. He was very aggressive and used three strategies to obtain sex acts. He was so aroused she could not stop him, he used convincing arguments and used serious force causing harm (the woman indicated that force causing harm was one of the ten coercive strategies used to obtain sex, however, when later asked if she suffered any physical harm she indicated none. She did indicate that during her struggles she inflicted some physical harm to the man, which may explain the discrepancy). She responded to the experience by turning cold, reasoning, pleading or quarrelling, crying, and physically struggling. He became more aggressive. She did not respond to the question about whether she had sex with this person again. She responded that the experience was quite traumatic and she was quite scared. She very much regretted the experience, and told no one about the experience. She reported being somewhat responsible for the experience and indicated that he was very responsible. She defined the experience as sexual assault.

ID978 A 21 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in the man's home during the previous two years of the study. The experience occurred with a romantic acquaintance whom she knew very well, and with whom she had engaged in sexual intercourse. She did not know if she had experienced unwanted sex previously with this man. She was drinking during the experience but he was not using intoxicants. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she made it quite clear that sex was not wanted. He was quite aggressive and used threats to end the relationship, and force to obtain sexual intercourse. She was too drunk to resist. She did not suffer any physical damage from the force. She responded to the situation by turning cold, crying, and doing nothing. Her response caused him to become more aggressive. She willingly engaged in sex with him after the experience. The experience was somewhat traumatic, and she was not scared, but quite angry. She very much regretted the experience. She told her partner about the experience but did not report it to authorities. She indicated that she was not at all responsible for the experience and that he was very responsible. She defined the experience as sexual assault.

These four vignettes, all defined as sexual assault, challenge the stereotypical image of sexual assault. Although these three cases shared the common strategy of force, which in and of itself should be enough to identify an experience as sexual assault, the previous three cases revealed the inherent difficulty some women have in defining such experiences as sexual assault. These women were able to identify their experiences as sexual assault, despite the fact that while these cases reflected the stereotypical vignette in some respects, they also contested that image in other respects. The mitigating factors that may have prevented the previous three women from identifying their cases as sexual assault, were also apparent in these cases.



For example, three cases involved men whom the women knew and had engaged in prior consensual sex. In two cases the woman was drinking. In one case the woman was somewhat clear she did not want sex. In one case the man was a little aggressive. In two cases the women used passive resistance strategies. In one case the man stopped. In one case the woman engaged in sex with the man after the experience. In two cases the women rated the experience as somewhat traumatic, and one woman indicated that she was somewhat scared, a little angry and regretted the experience somewhat. All of these factors may have prevented these women from identifying their experiences as sexual assault, yet they were not. This suggests that some progress has been made in revealing the structural and situational factors that prevent women from identifying their experiences as assault. These cases can be a valuable educational tool to combat the stereotypical image of sexual assault.

It is interesting to note that three of the cases involved situations in which the man used force and other strategies to push the sexual experience beyond previous levels of behaviour. This brings up two points. First it may reflect the cultural assumption of male privilege over women's sexuality regardless of women's own desires, especially if the couple previously engaged in sex. Second, these vignettes may reflect the sexual double standard that requires men to "score," to obtain sex no matter what the woman does or says. Both of these points are evident in three cases in which the men became more aggressive when the women resisted sex. Not only do these cases challenge the stereotypical image of sexual assault, they reveal the underlying cultural assumptions that dictate male female relations.

Unfortunately, these cases also remain hidden. Despite the fact that these women labelled these experiences as sexual assault, none of them reported the experience to authorities. As such, these cases are beyond the notice of campus officials, who assume that these kinds of behaviours do not occur. What is not clear from this data why the women did not report these cases despite identifying them as criminal acts. This is an important area to be explored at both a campus and societal level.

It is clear that these previous seven cases represent the more coercive experiences encountered by women at the University of Alberta. However, these seven cases represent only the forced sex experiences of female students in the sample, many other women encountered unwanted sex because of other strategies.

### Threats

Only one female victimization case involved the use of threats to obtain sex. This student indicated that the other person had sex with her because he threatened her with physical force and/or a weapon, yet she indicated that this experience was *not* sexual assault.

ID187 A woman aged 22 years reported an experience that occurred in the man's home more than two years prior to the study. He was a nonromantic acquaintance whom she knew moderately well and with whom she had previous consensual sexual intercourse, and with whom she had experienced one previous unwanted sexual experience. Neither person used intoxicants. She did not know if initial consent was given for sex and then withdrawn, but she was quite clear that she did not want to have sex. He was somewhat aggressive, and was so sexually aroused she couldn't stop him, and he used continual arguments, and threats to obtain sex play. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by reasoning, pleading or quarrelling. Her response caused him to stop. She willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was a little traumatic, and that she was not at all scared, but a little angry. She very much regrets the experience. She told a friend(s) about the experience. She said that she was very responsible for the experience and that he was quite responsible. She indicated that the experience was *not* sexual assault.

Theoretically, this experience should be labelled as sexual assault because it involved threats to obtain sex play. However, it was not defined as such, possibly because of prior sexual involvement. Again, the vignettes lack the context available in real life situations. However, it is clear that at some point in this sexual interaction, threats were used. Whether or not the sex was obtained because of threats is not absolutely clear, and as such it is not possible to label this as a sexual assault. What is clear is that this is not a description of a consensual sexual interaction. Instead it represents, at the very least, a coercive experience.

This vignette also offers important insight into the complexity of the issue of consent. This woman did not know if she initially gave consent and then withdrew it. Intoxicants were not involved, so the woman's judgement wasn't impaired by alcohol or drugs. Instead this seems to reflect the reliance on sexual scripts to dictate how a sexual situation will unfold. As well, structural factors such as prior sexual involvement or the woman's actions during the sexual interaction may have made this woman question if she gave consent. This is another issue that requires further exploration. If this woman did not know if she gave consent, then it stands to reason she did not *actively* give consent, which brings into question how women determine if consent was given. If women rely on the structural and situational factors, which favour men's interpretation of a sexual interaction over women's, to determine if consent was given then women are not acting as sexual agents. Women need to learn how to be sexually autonomous in order to provide meaningful consent, however, existing constraints make this autonomy difficult to realize. It is clear that more work needs to be done to reveal the structures that prevent women from knowing if they have provided consent. It is important for women to learn that consent is something that they actively give, not something that is interpreted for them by others. As long as men have the power and authority to define women's consent, women will never be able to consent with any real efficacy.

This case reveals yet another link in the continuum of sexual coercion encountered by women at the University of Alberta. Again, the lack of reporting camouflages this experience as normative rather than criminal.

### Position of Authority

Three women reported experiences in which they felt coerced to have sex because a man used his position of authority over them. While no male victims reported this type of experience, one male aggressor admitted to using his position to coerce a woman to have sex.

ID459 A 20 year old female reported an experience that occurred in or near a University building six months prior the study. The man was a nonromantic acquaintance whom she knew slightly and whose status with the University was unknown. No information was provided for previous sexual experience, either consensual or unwanted, with this man. She was not using intoxicants and did not know if he was. Initial consent for sex was given and then withdrawn, and she was somewhat clear that sex was not wanted. He was a little aggressive and used convincing arguments, gave false information, used his position of authority and some "other" strategy to obtain sex play. She did not suffer any physical harm. She responded to the situation by turning cold, reasoning, pleading or quarrelling, and by physically struggling. Her response caused him to be less aggressive. She did not willingly engage in sex with this person again. She indicated that the experience was very traumatic, and that she was not at all scared but somewhat angry during the experience. She very much regretted that the experience occurred. She told her partner and a friend(s) but did not report the experience to authorities. She felt very responsible for the experience and said that he was quite responsible. She defined the experience as sexual assault.

ID959 A 23 year old female had one experience that occurred in another person's home six months prior to the study. The person was a romantic acquaintance whom she knew slightly and who was not affiliated with the University. She had never had previous unwanted sex with this man, and did not indicate if they had engaged in prior consensual sex. She was not using intoxicants but he was drinking. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she made it quite clear that she did not want to have sex. He was a little aggressive and used five strategies to obtain sex play. He was so aroused she couldn't stop him, he used convincing arguments, gave false information, threatened to end their relationship, and used his position of authority to coerce her to have sex play. She was not physically harmed. She responded to the situation by doing nothing. Her response caused him to become more aggressive. She did not willingly engage in sex with him again. The experience was a little traumatic, and she was a little scared and a little angry. She very much regretted the experience. She indicated that she was not at all responsible for the experience and that he was quite responsible. She told her friends, her partner, some faculty personnel at the University of Alberta, and some other person. She did not report the experience to the police. She did not know if this experience was sexual assault.

ID24 An 18 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in or near a University residence during a party or a dance only one month prior to the study. The person was a date whom she knew very well and who was also another student. She had previously had consensual sex with him going as far as sex play, as well as one previous unwanted sexual experience. She was using alcohol at the time and does not know if he was. Initial consent was given for sex and she changed her mind, indicating a clear lack of consent. She was somewhat clear that she did not want to have sex. He was somewhat aggressive, and used convincing arguments and his position of authority, and she was too drunk or stoned to resist, leading to sex play. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by doing nothing. Her response had no effect on him. She willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was not at all traumatic, and that she was not at all scared, but somewhat angry. She very much regretted the experience. She said that they were both very responsible for the experience. She indicated that this experience was *not* sexual assault.

ID78 A 19 year old male reported and experience that occurred one year prior to the study in his home. The experience occurred with a woman who was a romantic acquaintance whom he knew extremely well, and with whom he had previous consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. He also had unwanted sex with this woman five or more times prior to this experience. Intoxicants were not involved. She did not give initial consent for sex and then change her mind, and she was a little clear that sex was not wanted. He was not at all aggressive, was so sexually aroused he could not stop himself, and he used a position of authority to obtain sexual intercourse. He did not suffer or inflict any physical damage on the woman. She responded to the situation by becoming aroused. This caused him to become more aggressive. He did engage in sex with her again. The experience was not at all traumatic for the man, and he did not feel scared or angry during the experience. He felt somewhat responsible, and she was not at all responsible for the experience. He did not answer the questions about whether or not he regretted the experience or how he defined it.

Despite the fact that all three female victims indicated that the man used his position of authority over them to coerce them to have sex, none indicated that the man was a "person with authority over you" when asked about their relationship to the person. In two cases the man was a romantic acquaintance and another case involved a date. This is an interesting discrepancy which bears discussing. Similarly the man identified himself as a romantic acquaintance, even though the category "person over whom you had authority" was available in response to the relationship question. It is possible that these people read the relationship question to mean a person who has authority in society, such as a judge, or police officer, which did not apply to them. It is also possible that the term "person with authority over you" "person over whom you had authority" may be outmoded, indicating that people feel relatively free of any external authority. These vignettes lack enough information to determine if these men were in positions of authority, such as a professor, or residence personnel, which would indicate that they *were* in a position to coerce the women to have sex. Given that the men were romantic acquaintances/a date, the victims and the aggressor may have been reluctant to a position of authority. It is possible also that these people were referring to the differential status between women and the men, which would reflect the larger differential status between women and men in Canadian society. If so, it is necessary to challenge the structures that undermine women's own sense of authority in sexual situations. This is clearly an area that requires further clarification.

Each of the female cases were labelled differently from the other, one as sexual assault, one as unsure, and one as not sexual assault. All three cases went as far as sex play. It is interesting to note that the case which should be more readily identified as sexual assault because the woman was too drunk or stoned to resist, and she withdrew consent to sex, was identified as *not* sexual assault. Mitigating factors such as prior sexual involvement, alcohol use, and passive resistance may have prevented this woman from identifying this experience as assault. Again, the lack of real context makes it difficult to identify this experience as sexual assault. It is not clear when consent was withdrawn, or if the sex play occurred because the man used threats. Despite the lack of context, this case is clearly not one that would be identified as consensual. The use of coercive authority, and the woman's anger and regret, assigns this case to the coercive category. Despite the fact that this man used his position to coerce her, the woman indicated that the experience was not traumatic, and that she was not scared. This elicits two points. First, the lack of trauma or fear may indicate that the woman was unable to identify the seriousness of her experience because it was simply a normative part of how women and men interact. Evidence of this also exists in the prior unwanted sexual experience this woman reported with this man. While the vignettes supply more context for these experiences than is available using aggregate data, it is clear that further information is required to determine how the context of the relationship may affect the sexual interactions of the people involved. Second, this woman's lack of fear and trauma may reflect this woman's own unique way of coping with this experience. She indicates that she was too drunk or stoned to resist, and she resisted by doing nothing. While this woman may not need to label this experience as sexual assault, it is important to educate women that experiences like this are coercive and unacceptable. This study did not ask students if they considered these experiences as coercive, which is a key missing point in defining these experiences. This is most evident in the qualitative response of one woman.

ID959 "Where does sexual harassment come in? This is not a direct sex act but leading up to it. I think there are many issues of this on campus (unnecessary touching and verbal abuse/suggestions.) I had to withdraw from a course because of a male prof. as a problem; I felt very uncomfortable with him. An agency to assist individuals on campus would be great!"

This young woman did not specifically indicate that her own reported unwanted sexual experience was sexual harassment, but she did indicate that sexual harassment had been a problem for her in the past. The information provided in the vignettes and the qualitative response indicates that sexual harassment is a problem among women at the University of Alberta. Fortunately, one woman was able to identify her experience as sexual assault. This case may have been more easily identified as sexual assault because the woman did not know the man well, she withdrew consent, and she verbally and physically resisted. That the woman in case ID959 was unsure if her experience was sexual assault can likely be attributed to the fact that he was a romantic acquaintance. It is interesting to note that this man used several strategies and became more aggressive when she did nothing. This may prove that men interpret lack of active resistance as consent. It appears that this experience ended the sexual component of this relationship, and as such, while it was not defined as sexual assault, the woman likely identified it as coercive.

There is a marked discrepancy between the females' reports of coerced sex and the man's report with regard to the women's response. The male aggressor indicated that the woman he was with became aroused during the experience. None of the women reporting similar experiences indicated such a response. Instead all of the women indicated some level of fear, anger, trauma or regret, which suggests that these women's experiences were quite different from that reported by the man. This discrepancy may be due to the selective perception by the male, or it may reflect the actual experiences as reported. The vignettes do not provide enough information to make an accurate judgement about this issue. However, the man did report that he had unwanted sex with

the same woman five or more times, which reflect the unequal nature of their relationship. The continued unwanted sexual experiences reported by the man may simply reflect his belief that males are responsible for initiating sex regardless of the woman's desires, and he may see it as his "duty" to use his position of authority to obtain sex and arouse the woman. This is clearly an area that requires further consideration. More education is needed to assist women in identifying coercive experiences with authority figures as sexual assault, and to challenge the cultural assumptions about women's and men's power in society, and about men's sexual access to women. These four cases revealed the embeddedness of this issue in Canadian culture.

### Intoxication

According to the legal definition of sexual assault, a person is unable to provide consent if they are incapacitated, such as in cases of intoxication. The difficulty with this legal definition comes in determining at what point a person becomes incapacitated due to intoxication. Students in this study indicated that a person had unwanted sex with them because they were too intoxicated to resist. Theoretically, this means that they were unable to give consent, and any such action should constitute sexual assault. Eight women and three men reported cases in which they were too intoxicated to resist the sexual advances of another person. None of the cases involving were identified as sexual assault. Four of the women did not know if their experience was sexual assault, four women and three men said the experience was *not* sexual assault, and one man did not respond to the question. Not surprisingly, no aggressors indicated that they had sex with a person who was too intoxicated to resist. Of particular interest in these cases is the information outlining who used intoxicants during the experiences.



ID244 An 18 year old woman reported an experience that occurred in another person's home only a month prior to the study. The experience occurred with a nonromantic acquaintance whom she knew slightly. No information was given about any type of previous sex with this person. She was drinking during the experience but the man was not. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was quite clear that she did not want to have sex. He was not at all aggressive, and she was too drunk or stoned to resist leading to sex acts. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by doing nothing. Her behaviour had no effect on him. She did not willingly engage in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was somewhat traumatic, and that she was somewhat scared and somewhat angry during the experience. She very much regretted the experience. She said that both people were very responsible for the experience. She told a friend(s) about the experience but did not report it to authorities. She did not know if this experience was sexual assault.

ID968 A 21 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in her home two years before the study. The experience occurred with a romantic acquaintance whom she knew very well, and with whom she had engaged in previous consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. The couple had never had previous unwanted sex. She was drinking but he was not. Initial consent was given for sex and then withdrawn, and she was a little clear that she did not want to have sex. He was not at all aggressive, and she was so intoxicated she could not resist leading to sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by reasoning, pleading or quarrelling. Her response caused him to stop. She did not willingly engage in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was not at all traumatic, and that she was not at all scared but a little angry. She regretted the experience a little. She told no one about the experience. She indicated that she was not at all responsible for the experience but that he was a little responsible. She indicated that this experience was *not* sexual assault.

These first two cases involve women who were drinking at the time of the experience and men who were not. It is possible that both experiences reflect cases in which the men deliberately used the women's intoxication to obtain sex. Both of these cases involved men who were not drinking and women who were. The first case more closely reflects the stereotypical image of sexual assault. The woman hardly knew the man, she was clear she did not want sex, she never had sex with him again, and she indicated that she felt fear, anger, and regret. It appears that this is a case where a man "took advantage" of an intoxicated woman.

The second case was more difficult to interpret as sexual assault. The woman knew the man well, they had engaged in sex before, she wasn't very clear that sex was not wanted, he wasn't aggressive, she verbally resisted, and he stopped. While this case lacks some of the elements of a typical sexual assault, this woman had sex without providing clear consent. Although she did not rate the experience as traumatic, and

indicated that she was not scared, she did feel a little angry. She did not engage in sex with the man after the experience. The reason for this may be explained in her qualitative response.

ID968 "Feeling of embarrassment and guilt ruin a lot more relationships after a sexual assault than does the assault."

It is not clear if this response is referring to her own experience or to sexual assaults in general. Although she did not define her experience as sexual assault, it is possible that feelings of embarrassment and guilt were responsible for the termination of her relationship. It is not clear, however, what this woman means by feelings of embarrassment and guilt. Is she referring to feelings of guilt about being sexually active or feelings of guilt about being assaulted? These are issues that need to be explored. Perhaps it is not important to women to give their experiences a legal label. It may be more important to explore unwanted sexual experiences at the relational level at which many women live. The grief and pain of an ended relationship, the violation of expectations about how romantic relationships are supposed to be. These issues may be more important to women than defining them as sexual assault. However, the world requires facts and figures to justify the existence of certain issues, and sexual coercion is one of these issues. None of these women in this section were able to identify their experiences as sexual assault, despite the fact that many, such as the following, caused fear, anger, trauma, and regret.

ID#67 A 23 year old woman reported an experience that occurred in some other off-campus place (other than the list of off-campus locations provided in the questionnaire) two years prior to the study. The experience occurred with a person in a position of authority whom she never knew before, and who was not affiliated with the university. No information was given about previous sex, either consensual or unwanted. Neither person was using intoxicants during the experience. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was quite clear that she did not want to have sex. He was a little aggressive, was so sexually aroused she could not stop him, used continual arguments, gave false information, used some "other" strategy, and she was too drunk or stoned to resist leading to sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She replied "don't know" to the questions about types of resistance she offered and the effect on him. She did not willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was very traumatic, and that she was very scared and very angry during the experience. She very much regretted the experience. She indicated that both people were very responsible for the experience. She told no one about the experience. She did not know if this experience was sexual assault.

This case provides an interesting contrast to those in the previous section. The man in this experience was identified as a person in a position of authority, yet the women did not identify this as a coercive strategy to obtain sex. Clearly the issue of position of authority requires further investigation to determine how people evaluate how this position is used to obtain sex. This experience occurred with someone the woman never knew before, and since neither person was drinking during the experience, it is safe to assume that the young woman was intoxicated when the man approached her. He used several forms of coercion to get her to have sexual intercourse even though she was quite clear that she did not want sex. The experience was very traumatic and she was very scared, yet she was unable to identify this experience as sexual assault. Other cases also involve high levels of fear, anger, trauma, and/or regret, and in some cases physical harm.

ID747 A 20 year old woman reported an experience that occurred in the man's home two or more years prior to the study. The man was a nonromantic acquaintance whom she knew slightly with whom she had never had previous sex of any kind, either consensual or unwanted. Both people were using drugs and alcohol at the time of the experience. Initial consent for sex was given and then withdrawn, and she was quite clear that sex was not wanted. He was somewhat aggressive, and used convincing arguments, gave her false information, and she was too drunk or stoned to resist resulting in sexual intercourse. She suffered a little physical damage and she also inflicted some physical damage on him. She responded to the aggression by turning cold, crying, and physically struggling. Her response caused him to become more aggressive. No information was given regarding further sexual experience with him. She reported that the experience was very traumatic and that she was very scared and very angry. She very much regretted the experience. She indicated that both people were very responsible for the experience. She told a friend(s) and family but did not report the experience to the authorities. She did not know if this experience was sexual assault.

ID880 An 18 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in another person's home six months prior to the study. The experience occurred with nonromantic acquaintance whom she knew very well, and with whom she had previously engaged in consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. She had never had previous unwanted sex with this man. She was using drugs during the experience and he was drinking. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was somewhat clear that she did not want to have sex. He was very aggressive, and was so sexually aroused she could not stop him, he used continual arguments, and she was too drunk or stoned to resist ending in sex play. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by reasoning, pleading or quarrelling and by doing nothing. She did become aroused during the experience. She did not know what effect her response had on him. She did not willingly engage in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was somewhat traumatic, but that she was not scared or angry during the experience. She very much regretted the experience. She told a friend(s) about the experience. She said that both people were very responsible for the experience. She did not identify this experience as sexual assault.

ID950 A 20 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in another person's home one year prior to the study. The experience occurred with nonromantic acquaintance whom she knew slightly, and with whom she had never had previous sex of any kind, either consensual or unwanted. Both people were using alcohol during the experience. Initial consent was not given for sex and then withdrawn, and she was somewhat clear that she did not want to have sex. He was quite aggressive, used continual arguments, and she was too drunk or stoned to resist ending in sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by turning cold and reasoning, pleading or quarrelling. Her response had no effect on him. She did not reply to the question about whether she willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was very traumatic, and that she was somewhat scared and quite angry during the experience. She very much regretted the experience. She told a friend(s) about the experience. She indicated that she was very responsible for the experience and he was only a little responsible. She defined this experience as not sexual assault.

ID931 A 23 year old woman reported an experience that occurred in her university residence in the year previous to the study. The experience occurred with a nonromantic acquaintance whom she knew moderately well. No information was provided about previous sex of any kind. Both people were using alcohol. Initial consent for sex not given and then withdrawn, and she was a little clear that she did not want to have sex. He was a little aggressive, and used continual arguments, threats to end the relationship, and she was too drunk or stoned to resist. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by doing nothing. Her response caused him to become less aggressive. She willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was very traumatic, but that she was not at all scared but a little angry during the experience. She very much regrets the experience. She told a friend(s) and residence personnel or a roommate but did not report the experience to authorities. She indicated that both people were very responsible for the experience. She indicated that this experience was not sexual assault.

ID537 An 18 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in or near a university building one month prior to the study. The person was a date whom she knew slightly, and with whom she had never previously had sex of any kind, either consensual or unwanted. Both people were drinking during the experience. No initial consent for sex was given and then withdrawn, and she was somewhat clear that she did not want to have sex. He was somewhat aggressive and was so aroused she couldn't stop him, he used convincing arguments, and she was too drunk or stoned to resist, leading to sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by physically struggling. Her response caused him to stop. She did not respond to the question about willingly engaging in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was somewhat traumatic, and that she was a little scared and not at all angry. She somewhat regretted the experience, and told no one about the experience. She indicated that both people were somewhat responsible for the experience. She did not know if this experience was sexual assault.

While the circumstance in these cases vary, it is clear that all of these women reported unwanted sexual experiences in which they were too intoxicated to resist, indicating a lack of consent. There are three points to be made here.

First, many of these women reported experiences involving some level of trauma, fear, anger and regret, and in some cases physical harm. Regardless of the circumstances, these cases do not reflect consensual sexual interactions.

Second, some people argue that women use alcohol to absolve themselves of responsibility for their sexual actions. If they are unable to resist sex when they are drunk, then they are not responsible for their actions. However, this is a no-win situation for women. The sexual double standard and the lack of positive role models for sexual women makes it difficult to be a sexual woman. If women have sex too readily they are labelled loose, as evidenced by students' attitudes in the previous section of this paper. If they do not have sex, they may lose status with their peer group. If women fall back on intoxication to absolve themselves of responsibility for their actions, it is because society makes no allowances for sexual women.

Third, society has a certain level of tolerance for coercive sexual situations involving intoxicated women. Some of these cases involved multiple forms of coercion and lack of consent, the cases varied by level of aggression, resistance, and effect on the victim, yet none of them were identified as sexual assault. Many of these women assumed equal or more responsibility for the experience, which is consistent with the literature. These coercive experiences remain hidden by the structural and situational factors that prevent women from identifying their experiences as assaultive.

Sex with an intoxicated woman who does not want sex at that time is coercive and in some circumstances is a crime. It is not appropriate to engage in sex with an intoxicated woman at any time because the issue of consent is not clear and men who engage in this type of behaviour leave themselves open to criminal charges.. Further

education is required to identify such experiences as inappropriate, to challenge the rigid regulation of women's sexuality, and to challenge the mistaken assumption that intoxication implies consent.

Quite a different picture emerges for men who reported unwanted sexual experiences in which they were too intoxicated to resist. Of the three male victim cases involving intoxication, only one resembles the experiences reported by female victims.

ID565 A 36 year old male reported an experience that occurred in his home more than two years prior to the study. The experience occurred with a male date, whom the man did not know before the experience. The victim indicated that they had never previously engaged in unwanted sex prior to this experience, but he did not provide any information about prior consensual sex. Both men were using both drugs and alcohol during the experience. The victim did not provide initial consent to sex and then change his mind, and the victim was not at all clear that sex was not wanted. The aggressor was somewhat aggressive, and used four strategies to obtain sex acts. The aggressor was so sexually aroused the victim could not stop him, the aggressor used continual arguments, and gave false information and the victim was too drunk or stoned to resist. The victim suffered some physical damage. The victim responded to the experience by doing nothing, he did not become aroused. The victim's response had no effect on the other man. The victim did not engage in consensual sex with the man after this incident. The experience was rated as very traumatic, and the victim felt very scared, and a little angry during the experience. He very much regretted the experience. The victim indicated that he was quite responsible and the other man was somewhat responsible for the experience. The victim told a friend(s) about the experience, and the friend(s) was/were not at all supportive. He defined the experience as *not* sexual assault.

This case appears to be a same-sex sexual assault, yet the man did not identify it as assault. His case was similar to the female victims' cases in that the experience was very traumatic, and the man experienced physical harm as a result of the experience. It is interesting that even though this case was clearly a sexual assault, this man was unable to identify it as such. This inability may be due to the lack of information about male victims, and the scepticism men face in reporting victimizations. This man told a friend about the experience and received no support. The other two cases that involved intoxication as a coercive strategy did not resemble this experience.

ID790 A 21 year old male reported one experience that occurred in another person's home in the six months prior to the study. The experience occurred with a woman who was a date, and whom he knew moderately well. The man had previously engaged in consensual sex with the woman going as far as sex play. Both people were drinking during the experience. The man did give initial consent for sex, and then changed his mind, and he was a little clear that sex was not wanted. She was quite aggressive, and was so sexually aroused he could not stop her, and he was too drunk or stoned to resist leading to sex acts. He did not suffer any physical damage. He responded to the experience by doing nothing, and becoming aroused. His response caused her to become more aggressive. He did engage in sex with her after this incident. The experience was not at all traumatic, and he did not feel at all scared or angry during the experience. He did not regret the experience at all. He indicated that neither person was responsible for the experience. He defines the experience as not sexual assault.

ID165 A 23 year old male reported an experience that occurred in an off-campus bar or restaurant in the six months prior to the study. The experience happened with a romantic acquaintance whom he knew extremely well, and with whom he had engaged in consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse, but with whom he never encounter unwanted sex. Both people were using alcohol during the experience. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and he was not at all clear that sex was not wanted. She was very aggressive, and she was so aroused he could not stop her, she used "other," and he was too drunk or stoned to resist leading to sexual intercourse. He did not suffer any physical damage. He responded to the experience by becoming aroused. His response had some "other" effect on her. He did not engage in sex with her after this incident. The experience was not at all traumatic, and he did not feel at all angry or scared during the experience. He did not answer the questions about regretting the experience or about how he defined the experience. He indicated that he was very responsible but that she was somewhat responsible for the experience.

While these two cases also involve alcohol as the main coercive strategy, they appear to be quite different from the female victims and the other man's experience, in that neither of these men found the experience traumatic, nor did they feel fear or anger during the experience. In both cases the men became aroused. It is interesting to note that the one experience (ID165) involved unwanted sexual intercourse that occurred in a bar or restaurant. It is possible that the man objected to the experience occurring in a public place rather than the experience in general. The man did not engage in consensual sex again with this woman.

There are two ways to view these last two cases. The first would suggest that these men described experiences that, while unwanted, were also consensual. On the other hand, it is possible that these men encountered unwanted experiences that they were

unable to identify as coercive because men have been socialized to be the aggressors rather than the victims. These men may have encountered unwanted sexual experiences that were unpleasant, but social expectations required them to downplay the seriousness of the experience. The sexual double standard suggests that men should always be ready for sex and should always enjoy it. The sexual double standard and sex scripts may work against men in identifying their own coercive experiences as serious.

Differential standards are applied to men and women who drink. Women who are assaulted while drinking are blamed for placing themselves in danger, men who experience unwanted sex while drinking are not taken seriously. These three male cases illustrated that unwanted sex can, and does, happen to men, and that men can be sexually assaulted. They showed that when men were faced with unwanted coercive sex, they were unable to identify their experience as sexual assault. Female victims who reported unwanted sex because of intoxication were more likely than the men to say that the experience was moderately to very traumatic. Only one woman (ID968) reported that her experience was not at all traumatic, nor was she scared, but she was a little angry. She also reported that she regretted the experience only a little. This woman's case appeared to be more similar to the men's reported cases than did the other women's cases. In general, these vignettes showed that when women were the aggressors and intoxication was the main strategy used to obtain sex, the flavour of the experience was substantially different from female victim's reports of unwanted sex with male aggressors, a finding consistent with the literature.

### Physical Harm

While several women and one man reported experiencing physical damage as a result of their experience, only three female cases involved less serious forms of coercion that resulted in physical damage. No male aggressors or male victims reported these types of experiences. In spite of the physical harm, only one woman identified her



experience as sexual assault, the other two women did not know if the experience was sexual assault.

ID455 A 22 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in the man's home two years prior to the study. It involved a nonromantic acquaintance whom she knew moderately well. No information was given regarding previous sexual experience of any kind, either consensual or unwanted, with this person. She was not using intoxicants and did not know if he was. No initial consent for sex was given and then withdrawn, and she made it somewhat clear that she did not want sex. He was very aggressive, and used continual arguments and some "other" strategy leading to sexual intercourse. She suffered a little physical damage as a result of the experience. She responded to the experience by turning cold, and by reasoning, pleading or quarrelling. Her response had some "other" effect on him. She willingly engaged in sex with this person again after this experience. She indicated that the experience was not traumatic at all, and that she was not at all scared but quite angry. She very much regretted the experience, and did not tell anyone about the experience. She said that she was somewhat responsible and that he was very responsible. She defined the experience as sexual assault.

ID607 A 22 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in her home in the year prior to the study. He was a nonromantic acquaintance, whom she knew very well, and with whom she had consensual sex before, going as far as sexual intercourse. She also had two previous unwanted sexual experiences with this person. Neither person was using intoxicants during the experience. Initial consent for sex was not offered and then withdrawn, and she was quite clear that she did not want sex. He was somewhat aggressive, and used continual arguments to obtain sexual intercourse. She suffered a little physical damage from the experience. She turned cold during the experience, and did nothing. Her response had no effect on him. She willingly engaged in sex with him again. She reported that the experience was somewhat traumatic. She was a little scared, and very angry during the experience. She regretted the experience quite a bit. She told no one about the experience. She rated herself as very responsible for the experience and him as quite responsible. She did not know if the experience was sexual assault.

ID73 A 21 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in some other off-campus place (other than the choices listed in the questionnaire) more than two years prior to the study. The experience occurred with a date whom she knew slightly, and with whom she had previous sex going as far as sex play. They had never had unwanted sex. Both people were using alcohol. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was quite clear that she did not want to have sex. He was somewhat aggressive, and used continual arguments and some "other" strategy to obtain sexual intercourse. She suffered a little physical damage during the experience and she inflicted a little physical damage on him. She responded to the situation by turning cold, reasoning, pleading or quarrelling, physically struggling, and doing nothing. Her response had no effect on him. She did not willingly engage in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was quite traumatic and that she was quite scared and quite angry. She very much regretted the experience. She told her partner and a friend(s) about the experience, but did not report it to authorities. She said that she was very responsible and that he was quite responsible for the experience. She did not know if this experience was sexual assault.

The first case may have been more easily identified by the woman as sexual assault because the man was very aggressive, which may explain the physical harm suffered by the woman. One might assume that the physical harm in these cases may have derived from the women's resistance to unwanted sex, since none of the women indicated that physical force was used. Yet, in only one case did the woman physically struggle. The other two cases involved more passive forms of resistance, turning cold, doing nothing, and verbal resistance, one of which was defined as sexual assault, the other unsure. It is not clear how these women received the physical damage they report. It is possible that the physical act of sexual intercourse caused these women harm. This in and of itself identifies these experiences as coercive. Sex is not supposed to physically damage people, it is supposed to provide pleasure (unless of course these people are engaging in sadomasochistic forms of sex). Interestingly enough, the woman who defined her experience as sexual assault rated the experience as not at all traumatic, and said she was not at all scared but very angry. The two cases in which the women were unsure if their experience was sexual assault rated the experience as somewhat and quite traumatic, and said they were a little and quite scared, and both said they were quite angry. While level of trauma and fear varied, all women were quite or very angry during the experience, which confirms that these women are not reporting consensual sexual experiences. Two women added qualitative responses that offer further insight into their experiences.

ID455 "For people that admitted to sex against their will it should have been possible to more clearly explain why because quite often it is quite psychological ie/ to do with their own self-concept and self-assurance. Also it should have been possible for people to tell how they may have dealt with the assault in their own way by revenge and why this was preferable compared to normal legal channels or counselling.

This woman points to a very important issue in understanding sexual coercion in society, women's self-concept and self-assurance. Recall that women are socialized to be passive, and nurturing. Recall also that differential socialization devalues feminine

characteristics, and thus, women themselves, in favour of masculine characteristics, and thus, men. This young woman clearly identifies the difficulties women face in sexual experiences. If women are taught that their needs are not as important as the needs of men, then they will be more likely to engage in sex for reasons other than personal desire. Clearly, both women and men lose when women are unable to freely engage in sex out of personal desire. The best way to combat this is to reveal the structure that assigns one gender dominance over another.

This young woman also brings an interesting perspective to dealing with unwanted sex, revenge. It is unfortunate that this woman did not provide more information about her own experience and this topic. Her insight did, however, highlight the reluctance of women to use normal legal channels which often revictimize women. It is not clear if this woman's response about revenge is a relatively rare occurrence, however, it warrants further investigation.

ID607 "I believe my experience occurred because I was molested by my father. I believe more research should be put into discovering why these experiences happen. I'm glad to see this survey being done!!!"

This woman's qualitative response echoes that of the young woman who wrote that previous sexual victimization affected her ability to respond to men. It is possible that this woman's previous victimization prevented her from actively responding to this unwanted experience. This is an important factor in combatting sexual assault. Until women can freely and completely consent to sex, they will always be at risk for experiences such as these. Despite the fact that all of these women experienced physical harm as a result of their experience, only one was able to identify it as sexual assault. The other experiences were nonconsensual and coercive. It is clear that these cases add to the growing continuum of unwanted sex faced by University of Alberta women.

## Withdrawn Consent

Legally, if a person withdraws consent to sex, and sex continues, a sexual assault has occurred. Fourteen people reported cases in which consent was the identifying agent for categorization. Legally all 14 cases should be identified as sexual assault, however, only one woman identified her experience as such. It is interesting to note that male aggressors reported experiences have been conspicuously absent in the analysis up to this point. Five female victims, three male victims and six male aggressors indicated experiences surrounding the issue of consent. All of the victims, both females and males, indicated that they had originally given consent to sex and then changed their minds. Of the six male aggressors, three indicated that the woman changed her mind, and three indicated that they did not know if consent had been initially provided and then withdrawn. It becomes difficult to accurately identify these cases as sexual assault because the vignettes lack the context to determine if consent was withdrawn before the sex was obtained. However, the vignettes offer some interesting insights into this issue, especially with regard to gender differences in experiences.

Of the five female cases, only one identified her experience as sexual assault.

ID515 A 22 year-old female reported one experience that happened in her home, two or more years before the study. The man was a romantic acquaintance whom she knew very well. They had never had unwanted sex before but they had engaged in consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. Neither person was using intoxicants during this experience. She was somewhat clear that sex was not wanted. He was quite aggressive, and used continual arguments, and gave false information to obtain sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the experience by turning cold and doing nothing, and her response had no effect on him. She did not willingly engage in sex with him after this incident. She rated the experience as quite traumatic. She was not at all scared but very angry during the experience. She very much regretted the experience. She told only a friend(s) about the experience. She said that both people were very responsible for the experience. She did define the experience as sexual assault.

This case does reflect some of the elements of a stereotypical sexual assault. In cases where force is involved, coercion is clear. This case is characterized by lack of consent, where coercion is more difficult to determine. However, the man was quite

aggressive, the experience appears to have ended this romantic relationship, the woman rated the experience as very traumatic, and indicated that she was very angry, and that she very much regretted the experience. These factors point to an experience that is not consensual but coercive, and in this case assaultive. It is interesting to note that while this woman identified her experience as sexual assault, she also assumed equal responsibility for the experience. It may have been clear to this woman that she did not want sex, that she withdrew her consent to sex, and that, for her this constituted sexual assault, but the outward appearance of the experience highlights the difficulty society would have in identifying this experience as sexual assault. The next case also illustrates this difficulty.

ID237 An 18 year old woman reported an experience that occurred in the man's home within one month prior to the study. The experience occurred with a nonromantic acquaintance whom she knew extremely well. No information was given about previous sex of any kind with man, either consensual or unwanted. Neither person used intoxicants. Initial consent was given for sex and she changed her mind, and she was somewhat clear that she did not want to have sex. He was a little aggressive, and used false information and some "other" strategy leading to sex play. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by physically struggling and he became less aggressive. She did not willingly engage in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was somewhat traumatic, and that she was a little scared and a little angry during the experience. She very much regretted the experience. She told a friend(s) about the experience, but did not report it to police. She said that she was very responsible for the experience and that he was only somewhat responsible. She did not know if this was sexual assault.

This case may be a little clearer in terms of identifying nonconsent, based on the woman's physical resistance. Despite the fact that the woman withdrew her consent, and physically struggled, she did not know if this experience was sexual assault. Her inability to define this experience as sexual assault may be due to the fact that the experience went only as far as sex play, that he was only a little aggressive, and he became less aggressive when she physically struggled. By general societal standards this experience would not be easily identified as sexual assault. However, she rated it as somewhat traumatic, indicated that she was a little scared and angry, and that she very much regretted the experience. Again, this is not a report of a consensual experience. The next cases were labelled as not sexual assault. The reasons for this are apparent.

ID297 An 18 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in the man's home six months prior to the study. The experience occurred with a romantic acquaintance whom she knew extremely well, and with whom she had previous sexual intercourse. She also had two previous unwanted sexual experiences with this man. Neither person used intoxicants. Initial consent was given for sex and then withdrawn, and she was a little clear that she did not want to have sex. He was somewhat aggressive, and used "other" leading to sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by turning cold and doing nothing. Her behaviour caused him to become less aggressive. She willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was not at all traumatic, and that she was not at all scared but a little angry during the experience. She did not regret the experience, and told her partner about the experience. She said that she was quite responsible for the experience and that he was only somewhat responsible. She said that the experience was *not* sexual assault.

ID487 A 21 year old woman reported one experience that occurred outdoors within one year prior to the study. The experience occurred with romantic acquaintance, whom she knew very well, and with whom she had previous sex going as far as sexual intercourse. They never had unwanted sex previously. Neither person used intoxicants. Initial consent was given for sex and she changed her mind, and she was not at all clear that she did not want to have sex. He was not at all aggressive and used "other" get her to have sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any little physical damage. She responded to the situation by turning cold and doing nothing. Her response made him stop. She willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was a little traumatic, and that she was somewhat scared and somewhat angry during the experience. She regrets the experience a little bit. She told her partner about the experience. She said that she was very responsible for the experience and that he was only a little responsible. She said that the experience was *not* sexual assault.

ID495 A 20 year old woman reported an experience that occurred in her home six months prior to the study. The person was a romantic acquaintance, whom she knew very well, and with whom she had previously had sex going as far as sexual intercourse. She also had five or more previous unwanted sexual experiences with this man. Neither person was using intoxicants. Initial consent was given for sex and then withdrawn, and she was a little clear that she did not want to have sex. He was not at all aggressive, and was so sexually aroused she couldn't stop him, leading to sex play. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by turning cold. Her response had no effect on him. She willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was a little traumatic, and that she was not at all scared but somewhat angry. She did not regret the experience, and told no one about it. She said that neither she nor the man were responsible for the experience. She said that the experience was *not* sexual assault.

These three cases share certain similarities that prevented them from being identified as sexual assault. All involved established sexual relationships with romantic acquaintances whom the women knew very or extremely well. In general, the men were not very or not at all aggressive, the women were not very clear that they did not want sex, and they used only passive resistance to the experience. In all cases the women

willingly engaged in sex with the men after the experience. Overall, the experiences were not very traumatic, and, in general, the women did not regret the experience, or regretted it only a little.

These cases appear to be quite different than any others previously discussed. They may simply reflect different levels of sexual desire, experiences that are unwanted but not coercive or assaultive. As such, they would be located as the unwanted end of the continuum of unwanted sexual experiences. Again, it is not clear when consent was withdrawn, which would be a key factor in identifying these experiences as coercive. These cases do reflect the difficulty women have in actively responding to unwanted sexual experiences. These women indicated that these experiences were unwanted, and that they withdrew consent to the experience, yet they responded by turning cold or doing nothing. In one case, this response had no effect on the man, in another the man stopped, and in another the man became less aggressive. These cases indicate that these women had difficulty verbally communicating their desire not to continue with sex. It is possible that women interpret turning cold and doing nothing as active messages to indicate to their partners that they do not want sex. This may be dangerous for women who encounter men to whom passive responses indicate consent.

Clearly this is an area requiring more education. Sex scripts and the sexual double standard prevent women and men from clearly discussing their sexual expectations and sexual boundaries. In relying on such passive forms of resistance, women place themselves at risk. This does not mean that when women are assaulted that it is because they did not resist enough. Instead, it means that women need to actively and clearly indicate what they want sexually, and part of this means challenging the structural constraints that prevent women from doing so. Further insight into this issue is offered through the reports of male victims and male aggressors.

Three cases involved experiences in which the men gave consent to sex and then withdrew this consent.

ID557 A 22 year old man reported an experience that occurred in his University residence two years prior to the study. The experience occurred with a date, whom he knew slightly. He did not provided any information about previous sex with this woman. Both people were using alcohol during the experience. Initial consent was given for sex, and the man changed his mind, and he was not at all clear that sex was not wanted. She was not at all aggressive, was so sexually aroused he could not stop her, leading to sexual intercourse. He did not suffer any physical damage. He responded to the experience by becoming aroused. His response had no effect on her. He did engage in sex with her after this incident. The experience was not at all traumatic, and he did not feel at all scared or angry during the experience. He did not regret the experience. He indicated that neither person was responsible for the experience. He defined the experience as not sexual assault.

ID493 A 24 year old man reported an experience that occurred in his home one year prior to the study. The experience occurred with a spouse, with whom he had experienced unwanted sex five or more times, and with whom he had engaged in consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. No intoxicants were involved. Initial consent to sex was given by the man and then withdrawn, and he was a little clear that sex was not wanted. She was not at all aggressive, and was so sexually aroused he could not stop her, leading to sexual intercourse. He did not suffer any physical damage. He responded to the experience by becoming aroused. His response had no effect on her. He did engage in sex with her after this incident. The experience was not at all traumatic, and he did not feel scared or angry during the experience. He somewhat regretted the experience. He felt not at all responsible, and thought she was somewhat responsible. He defined the experience as not sexual assault.

ID970 A 20 year old man reported one experience that occurred in another person's home in the month prior to the study. The experience occurred with a nonromantic acquaintance, whom he knew very well, and with whom he had engaged in consensual sex going as far as sex acts. He had encountered unwanted sex with this woman once before. Both people were drinking during the experience. Initial consent was given for sex, and the man changed his mind, and he was a little clear that sex was not wanted. She was quite aggressive, and was so aroused he could not stop her, leading to sex acts. He did not suffer any physical damage. He responded to the experience by doing nothing, and by becoming aroused. His response caused her to be more aggressive. He did not engage in sex with her after this incident. The experience was not at all traumatic, and he did not feel at all angry or scared during the experience. He regretted the experience a little. He indicated that he was a little responsible for the experience, but that she was quite responsible for the experience. He defined the experience as not sexual assault.



These three cases show that men were capable of being involved in unwanted sexual experiences to which they did not consent. The sexual double standard would suggest that consent is a nonissue for men, since men are always supposed to be ready for sex. These three cases illustrate how internalized this double standard may be. While the men reported unwanted sexual experiences, the men became aroused, and rated the experience as not at all traumatic, reported that they were not scared or angry. Regret for the experience was moderate in two cases, and not at all in another. It is difficult to tell if these men are reporting experiences that were simply unwanted but not coercive, or if the sexual double standard prevents men from identifying these types of experiences as coercive. The vignettes lack sufficient data to make any judgements about these cases. However, these three reports of male cases differ significantly from those reported by females. None of the women reported that they became aroused during their experiences, and most indicated that they experiences some level of trauma, fear, anger or regret for their experiences. In the male, cases only two men indicated that they regretted the experiences a lit. In no cases did the men actively resist the women's advances even though they indicated that the women were so sexually aroused they could not stop them. It is interesting to note that in one case, the man did not continue his sexual involvement with the woman after the experience.

In general, it appears that women's experiences with unwanted sex were characteristically different from those of men, even when consent was the identifying factor in categorizing these cases. The issue of nonconsent does not appear to have affected men in the same way it did women. Again, this may reflect the reality of these cases, given the structural factors that affect male female relations, or the male cases may be obscured by these same structural factors. Regardless of which of these statements is true, it is clear that both women and men stand to benefit in challenging the structures that prevent honest, straightforward communication.

Three men reporting aggression experiences indicated that the woman initially gave consent and then withdrew it, and three men did not know if consent was given and then withdrawn.

ID975 A 19 year old male reported one experience that occurred one year prior to the study in his University residence. The woman was a romantic acquaintance, whom he knew extremely well, and with whom he had engaged in previous consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. He never had unwanted sex with her before this experience. Intoxicants were not involved. She did give initial consent for sex, and then changed her mind. She was a little clear that sex was not wanted. He was somewhat aggressive, and was so sexually aroused he could not stop himself, resulting in sexual intercourse. He did not suffer or inflict any physical damage. She responded to the situation by reasoning, pleading or quarrelling, and by becoming aroused. This caused him to stop. He did engage in sex with her again. The experience was not at all traumatic for him, and he did not feel scared but was a little angry during the experience. He does not regret the experience. He said he was a little responsible, and she was not at all responsible for the experience. He does not define the experience as sexual assault.

ID167 A 21 year old man reported an experience that occurred in the year prior to the study in the woman's home. She was a romantic acquaintance, whom he knew extremely well, and with whom he had previous consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. He also had unwanted sex with this woman five or more times prior to this experience. Both people were drinking during the experience. She did give initial consent for sex, and then changed her mind. She was not at all clear that sex was not wanted. He was a little aggressive, and used "other" to obtain sexual intercourse. He did not suffer or inflict any physical damage. She responded to the situation by turning cold, and doing nothing, she did not become aroused. This had some "other" effect on him. He did engage in sex with her again. The experience was very traumatic for him, but he did not feel scared or angry during the experience. He very much regretted the experience. He felt somewhat responsible, and said she was somewhat responsible for the experience. He did not define the experience as sexual assault.

ID1189 A 19 year old man reported an experience that occurred one year prior to the study in his home. She was a romantic acquaintance, whom he knew extremely well, and with whom he had previous consensual sex going as far as sex acts. He did not know how many times he had engaged in unwanted sex with this woman. Intoxicants were not involved. He did not know if she gave initial consent for sex and then changed her mind. She was a little clear that sex was not wanted. He was somewhat aggressive, and was so sexually aroused he could not stop himself, resulting in sex acts. He did not suffer or inflict any physical damage. She responded to the situation by becoming aroused. This had no effect on him. He did engage in sex with her again. The experience was not at all traumatic for him, and he did not feel scared or angry during the experience. He did not regret the experience. He said he was quite responsible, and she was not at all responsible for the experience. He did not define this experience as sexual assault.

ID791 A 20 year old man reported an experience that occurred two years prior to the study in the woman's home. She was a romantic acquaintance, whom he knew extremely well, and with whom he had previous consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. Unwanted sex occurred previously five or more times with this woman. Both people were using alcohol at the time of the experience. She did give initial consent for sex, and then changed her mind. She was a little clear that sex was not wanted. He was quite aggressive, and was so sexually aroused he could not stop himself, he used continual arguments, and gave false information to obtain sexual intercourse. He did not suffer or inflict any physical damage. She responded to the situation by turning cold, reasoning, pleading or quarrelling, by doing nothing, and by becoming aroused. This caused him to become less aggressive. He did engage in sex with her again. The experience was not at all traumatic for him, and he did not feel scared but was a little angry during the experience. He did not regret the experience. He said they were both a little responsible for the experience. He did not define the experience as sexual assault.

ID1014 A 23 year old man reported one experience that occurred six months prior to the study in some "other" location off-campus (other than those listed in the questionnaire). She was a romantic acquaintance, whom he knew extremely, and with whom he had previous consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. He never had unwanted sex with her before. Intoxicants were not involved. He did not know if the woman gave initial consent for sex and then changed her mind. She was a little clear that sex was not wanted. He was quite aggressive, and was so sexually aroused he could not stop, resulting in sexual intercourse. He did not suffer or inflict any physical damage. He said "no" to all of the choices about possible responses by the woman. This had no effect on him. He did engage in sex with her again. The experience was not at all traumatic for him, and he did not feel scared but was a little angry during the experience. He regretted the experience a little. He said he was quite responsible, and she was somewhat responsible for the experience. He did not define the experience as sexual assault.

ID893 An 18 year old man reported an experience that occurred in the month prior to the study in the woman's University residence. She was a romantic acquaintance, whom he knew moderately well, and with whom he had previous consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. He had unwanted sex with this woman once prior to this experience. Both people were drinking during the experience. He did not know if initial consent was given for sex and then she changed her mind. She was a little clear that sex was not wanted. He was somewhat aggressive, and was so sexually aroused he could not stop himself, and used "other" to obtain sexual intercourse. He did not suffer or inflict any physical damage. She responded to the situation by reasoning, pleading or quarrelling, and by becoming aroused. This caused him to be more aggressive. He did not engage in sex with her again. The experience was not at all traumatic for him, and he did not feel scared or angry during the experience. He did not regret the experience. He said neither person was responsible for the experience. He did not define the experience as sexual assault.

All of these cases occurred within established sexual relationships with women the men knew well. In all but one case, the sexual relationships continued after the experience. In four cases, unwanted sex had occurred before in the relationship. In four cases, the men reported that the women became aroused as a result of the experience. It appears from this information that men's reports of aggression experiences involving

withdrawn or ambiguous consent are quite different from those reported by women. In most of the cases, the men reported that they had sex with the woman because they were so sexually aroused or used some "other" strategy to obtain sex, and the women responded by became aroused. However, some women also responded using verbal resistance, turning cold, or doing nothing. These cases reflect the sexual double standard that require men to ignore a woman's resistance to sex.

It is possible to look at these cases in two ways. First, these men may be reporting cases in which the women really did become aroused. It is possible that the women in these relationships have internalized the attitudes that women who have sex too readily are "loose" and as such, they may rely on men to "persuade" them to have sex. Second, these men may be using selective perception in evaluating these cases as "wanted" by their partners, even though they report them as "unwanted." Given the discrepancy between women's reports of becoming aroused and men's reports of women becoming aroused, it is more likely that the second statement is truer than the first. However, these vignettes do not offer enough information to make a final judgement about these cases. Recall that men were more likely than women to accept that men have a biologically stronger sex drive than women. This attitude may be reflected in these men's mistaken belief that they have an obligation to arouse their partners and a right to "persuade" women to have sex. Both ways of looking at this issue suggest that women and men stand to benefit from challenging the structures that prevent clear communication.

One case deserves special notice. ID167 reports a case in which the woman changed her mind. She did not become aroused during this experience. The man indicated that the experience was very traumatic for him, and that he strongly regretted the experience. This clearly challenges the myth of the male as a heartless aggressors. This case reveals the difficulty that men face in dealing with sexual interactions. It is interesting to note that only one man has provided any sense of vulnerability as an initiator of sex. This man is to be applauded for his honesty in reporting such an

experience. It is important not to judge these cases using the stereotypical image of the aggressive male, but to seek to understand how men truly see unwanted sex. Only in this way can real change be effected. It has been argued that women's voices have been ignored in understanding sexual coercion. It may also be argued that many men have also been silenced by the proscriptive constraints on men's behaviour. Men's fear of vulnerability may prevent them from talking about this issue at a deeper, more personal level. Educational programs need to consider the constraints on both women and men in teaching students about sexual coercion. Without clear information and guidelines, men may be at a loss to know how to counter the hidden structural factors that prevent them from identifying their own behaviour as aggressive.

### Summary

These 42 cases have revealed the broad spectrum of unwanted sex among students at the University of Alberta. Cases ranged from those which more closely matched the stereotypical image of sexual assault, forced sex causing physical harm, to those that did not match it at all, unwanted sex that was not traumatic nor regretted. These cases revealed the complexity of sexual coercion, as well as the structural and situational constraints that prevent experiences from being identified as assault. There are some important points to make about these vignettes.

First, it is clear that some women had difficulty in identifying sexually coercive experiences as sexual assault, even when those experiences involved the most serious forms of coercion, and despite the fact that victimized women were more likely than other students to reject the myths associated with sexual assault. Second, many experiences remain hidden, through lack of reporting, and/or through the normalization of coercive experiences as acceptable. Third, experiences that were defined sexual assault did not always match the stereotypical image of sexual assault, challenging both the myths and the structures which perpetuate them. Fourth, students reported experiences that theoretically could have been defined as sexual assault, but that reflected

instead a wide range of experiences, including assault, coercion, and unwanted but consensual sex. Fifth, a clear distinction was revealed in between the experiences of female victims, male victims and male aggressors. In general, women reported more experiences involving more serious forms of coercion, and rated the experiences as more traumatic, and involving more fear, anger and regret than did the men. Sixth, some evidence was found of similarities in experience that transcended gender. One man reported a male-male rape which reflected the same level of trauma as many women's experiences. Some men regretted their experiences. Both women and men reported experiences that could be considered unwanted but not coercive. All of these factors reveal the true complexity of unwanted sexual experiences, suggesting the need to challenge the structural and situational factors that prevent women and men from truly enjoying consensual, pleasurable sex.

These 42 cases only represent cases that would more easily be identified as sexual assault. Other cases involving less serious forms of coercion would be less easily identified as sexual assault. These cases are discussed below.

### **Vignettes Less Easily Defined as Sexual Assault**

The vignettes in this section deal with coercive strategies such as verbal strategies, including continual arguments, false information, and threats to end the relationship, and strategies such as sexual arousal, and "other." Twenty-eight women and seven men reported experiences as victims, and two women and four men reported experiences as aggressors. The vignettes in the previous section were categorized according to the most serious form of coercion. It was more difficult to rank these strategies, especially since it is difficult to determine what "other" entails. Thus, the ordering of these vignettes was relatively arbitrary. Verbal strategies are discussed first, followed by sexual arousal, and finally "other" strategies are discussed last because of their ambiguity. Eight female victims, one male victim, and two male aggressors reported experiences involving verbal

strategies to obtain sex. Three female victims, three male victims, two female aggressors, and one male aggressor reported experiences involving sexual arousal to obtain sex. Twelve female victims, three male victims, and two male aggressors reported cases involving "other." Of these 40 cases, only four female victims identified their experiences as sexual assault.

### Verbal Strategies

The questions for this strategy read: "The person overwhelmed you with continual arguments and convinced you to have sex even though you did not want to" or "You overwhelmed them with continual arguments and convinced them to have sex." The wording of this question suggests that the victims would be under continual verbal pressure to have sex even though they did not want to. While it may be argued that use of this type of strategy may not be identified as sexual assault, the wording of the questions indicates some level of coercion. In these cases, the victim is "overwhelmed" with continual arguments. It is not possible to discuss these cases without involving the structural factors, such as differential socialization and the sexual double standard, that place women and men on an unequal playing field in matters of verbal "persuasion." Women may be reluctant to admit that they want sex, relying on men to "persuade" them. On the other hand, women's resistance to verbal strategies may simply be ignored until the woman gives in to sex. Conversely, men may feel compelled by these structures to be persistent in their attempts to verbally persuade a woman to have sex. In either case, if women are not believed when they resist continual arguments then the issue of consent for women is rendered meaningless.

ID393 A 23 year old woman reported an experience that occurred in her home within two years of the study. The experience occurred with a nonromantic acquaintance, whom she knew moderately well. No information was provided about previous sex of any kind with this man. Both people were drinking. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was very clear that she did not want to have sex. He was a little aggressive, and used continual arguments leading to sex acts. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by turning cold and physically struggling. Her behaviour had some "other" effect on him. She did not willingly engage in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was a little traumatic, and that she was somewhat scared and quite angry during the experience. She quite regretted the experience. She told a friend(s) but did not report the experience to authorities. She said that she was a little responsible for the experience, and that he was not at all responsible. She did not know if this experience was sexual assault.

ID57 A 21 year old female reported one experience that occurred in or near a university building within the year previous to the study. The experience occurred with a nonromantic acquaintance whom she knew slightly. She did not provide information about previous sex of any kind. Neither person was using intoxicants. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was somewhat clear that she did not want to have sex. He was somewhat aggressive, and used continual arguments leading to sex play. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by doing nothing, by turning cold, and running away. She does not know what her response was on him. She did not willingly engage in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was somewhat traumatic and that she was a little scared and very angry during the experience. She very much regretted the experience. She reported the experience to Campus Security and to the Sexual Harassment Office. both offices were very supportive. She said that she was somewhat responsible for the experience, and that he was very responsible. She defined this experience as *not* sexual assault.

These first two cases reveal experiences that may not be defined as assault, but would likely be identified as coercive. In both cases the women used active resistance strategies, they indicated some level of trauma, fear, anger, and regret, and in both cases the women did not continue a sexual relationship with these men. Neither case appears to be consensual, and as such, these cases would contribute to the continuum of unwanted sex reported by University of Alberta women. It is interesting to note that the second woman reported her case to two campus offices and that both offices were supportive, suggesting that at least some unwanted sexual experiences were revealed rather than remaining hidden. The second woman adds a qualitative response which helps to clarify her situation.

ID57 "There is a difference between harassment and assault this should be stated within this document. this is an important process you are dealing with."



Again, one of the limitations of this study is that it did not ask students if they considered their experiences sexual harassment. This is an important issue to include in any future surveys of students' perceptions of their unwanted experiences. The next two experiences differ from the first two in that they involved romantic acquaintances.

ID158 An 18 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in the man's university residence in the year prior to the study. The experience occurred with a romantic acquaintance whom she knew moderately well, and with whom she had previous sex going as far as sex play. She never encountered previous unwanted sex with this man. Neither person used intoxicants. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was somewhat clear that she did not want to have sex. He was somewhat aggressive, and used continual arguments leading to sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by reasoning, pleading or quarrelling, and physically struggling. Her response had no effect on him. She willingly engaged in consensual sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was quite traumatic, and that she was a little scared and quite angry during the experience. She very much regretted the experience, and told no one about the experience. She said that they were both very responsible for the experience. She defined this experience as *not* sexual assault.

ID457 A 23 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in her home within the year prior to the study. The experience occurred with a romantic acquaintance whom she knew extremely well, and with whom she had previous sexual intercourse. She did not know if she had previous unwanted sex with this man. Neither person used intoxicants. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was quite clear that she did not want to have sex. He was not at all aggressive, and used continual arguments to obtain sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded by becoming aroused. Her response had no effect on him. She willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was not at all traumatic, and that she was not scared but a little angry during the experience. She did not regret the experience. She did not tell anyone about the experience. She said that she was a little responsible for the experience, and that he was very responsible. She defined this experience as *not* sexual assault.

Despite the fact that both cases involve romantic acquaintances, and both women continued the sexual relationships after the experiences, these two cases differ substantially in the effect on the women. The first woman actively resisted and rated the experience as traumatic, and indicated that she was afraid, and angry, and she regretted the experience. On the other hand, the woman indicated that the experience was not traumatic, she was not scared, nor did she regret the experience. In fact, the second woman provides an interesting qualitative response.

ID457 "I think that your survey has biased questions that encourage people to overreact to the seriousness of sexual assault/harassment. I am not saying that this is not a serious issue; However, people should lighten up! ie This big push for recognizing acquaintance/date rape on campus is a NON-ISSUE. Concentrate on the real sexual assaults, not those in which some small minded female regrets having acted sexually with another man".

Not only has this woman internalized the message that sexual assault is a non-issue, she has also learned how to blame women for their sexual coercion. Given this perspective on sexual coercion she probably denies that her own experience as coercive and regards it as normative. Notice her distinction between "real" sexual assault and those sexual experiences which women regret. This qualitative response illustrates the ways in which sexual coercion remains hidden in normative experiences and internalized by women.

Continual arguments are not the only verbal strategy encountered by women in unwanted sexual experiences. They also experienced strategies in which the man gave them false information, such as he told the woman he loved her, or he threatened to end the relationship if she did not have sex with him. These forms of verbal strategies are more easily identified as coercive. One woman reported as case involving both continual arguments and false information.

ID564 A 23 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in another person's home two years prior to the study. The experience occurred with a romantic acquaintance, whom she knew moderately well, and with whom she had previous consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. She never encountered previous unwanted sex with this man. Both people were drinking during the experience. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was very clear that she did not want to have sex. He was somewhat aggressive, and used continual arguments and false information to obtain sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by turning cold. Her response had no effect on him. She did not willingly engaged in consensual sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was a little traumatic, and that she was somewhat scared and very angry during the experience. She quite regretted the experience, and told a friend(s) about the experience. She said that she was somewhat responsible and that he was very responsible for the experience. She defined this experience as *not* sexual assault.

In this case the man was a romantic acquaintance with whom the woman had engaged in previous sexual intercourse. The experience was a little traumatic, she was somewhat scared and quite angry, and she quite regretted the experience. The couple did not engage in consensual sex after this experience, which suggests that the relationship may have ended as a result of the experience. Although the woman did not define this experience as sexual assault, it is clear that it was coercive. All of the above cases illustrate the variety of coercion that women encounter as a result of verbal strategies. Although these cases do not reflect the seriousness of cases involving physical force or threats, they do contribute to the continuum that prevents women from obtaining sexual equality and autonomy.

Only one male aggressor reported a case involving continual arguments as a strategy.

ID1010 A 23 year old man reported an experience that occurred six months prior to the study in his University residence. The woman was a romantic acquaintance, whom he knew extremely well, and with whom he had previous consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. He also had unwanted sex with this woman once prior to this experience. Intoxicants were not involved. She did not give initial consent for sex and then change her mind, and she was a little clear that sex was not wanted. He was a little aggressive, and used continual arguments to obtain sexual intercourse. He did not suffer or inflict any physical damage. He indicated that she did not respond in any of the ways listed in the questionnaire. This had no effect on him. He did engage in sex with her again. The experience was not at all traumatic for the man, and he did not feel scared but was a little angry during the experience. He did not regret the experience. He said he was a little responsible, and she was not at all responsible for the experience. He did not define the experience as sexual assault.

This appears to be a case involving unequal levels of sexual desire. It is interesting to note that the man indicated that the woman did not respond in any of the ways listed. The experience occurred within an established sexual relationship that continued after the experience. This case does appear to be different from the other listed above in that the man indicates that this experience was not traumatic nor regretted.

In addition to verbal strategies, both sexual arousal and "other" may be used in unwanted sexual experiences. The question about sexual arousal read, "The person was so sexually aroused you couldn't stop them" or "You were so sexually aroused you couldn't stop." The image of sexual arousal brings to mind some level of physical contact, yet these cases did not involve physical force or physical harm. Because of the structural factors such as the sexual double standard and differential socialization, the sexual arousal strategies will have very different meanings for women and men. Again, women who resist this type of strategy may simply do so to avoid appearing "loose," and men may simply follow the directions that require them to "act like a man." This issue of sexual arousal also evokes the issue of the cultural assumption of men's access to women's sexuality. At what level do women have a right to say no in a meaningful way in a culture that places men's sexual needs above those of women? The sexual arousal strategy may simply reflect the way in which coercive men ignore women's resistance.

The issue of "other" as a coercive strategy is more difficult to determine. It may simply reflect the seduction strategies discovered by the Struckman-Johnsons. Or these cases may reflect some other strategy not picked up in the other nine categories of strategies. For example, although threat of physical force or a weapon were used, no category was formed for other types of threats, such as threats to other people or possessions. Also, victims may feel coerced in ways not indicated in the list, they may feel bullied into sex, or harassed into sex. Again, it is not clear what "other" entails. However, some vignettes offer clearer pictures of this issue.

Three female victims reported cases involving verbal strategies combined with sexual arousal and/or "other."

ID494 A 19 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in his home within the previous year of the study. The person was a date whom she knew moderately well, and with whom she had previously had consensual sex going as far as sex acts. She also experience unwanted sex with this man twice before this experience. Both people were drinking during the experience. No initial consent for sex was given and then withdrawn, and she was somewhat clear that she did not want to have sex. He was a little aggressive, was so aroused she couldn't stop him, and he used convincing arguments to get her to have sex acts. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by turning cold, and she did not know if she did nothing. Her response had no effect on him. She willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was a little traumatic and that she was a little scared and somewhat angry. She quite regrets the experience and told no one about the experience. She said that she was a little responsible for the experience, and that he was very responsible. She did not know if this experience was sexual assault.

ID275 A 25 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in her home two years prior to the study. The experience occurred with a romantic acquaintance whom she knew moderately well, and with whom she had previous consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. She also experiences unwanted sex with this man several times previous to this experience. No intoxicants were used. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was quite clear that she did not want to have sex. He was somewhat aggressive, used continual arguments, and was so sexually aroused she couldn't stop him, leading to sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by turning cold and doing nothing. Her response had no effect on him. She willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was somewhat traumatic, and that she was a little scared and a little angry. She very much regrets the experience. She told no one about the experience. She said that she was somewhat responsible for the experience, and that he was quite responsible. She did not know if this experience was sexual assault.

ID380 A 22 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in or near a University building one year prior to the study. The experience occurred with a romantic acquaintance whom she knew very well and with whom she had consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. The couple had also been involved in unwanted sex five or more time previous to this experience. Neither person used intoxicants. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was quite clear that she did not want to have sex. He was a little aggressive, was so sexually aroused she couldn't stop him, and he used continual arguments and some "other" strategy to obtain sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by turning cold, reasoning, pleading and quarrelling, and crying and sobbing, and physically struggling. She also became aroused. Her behaviour caused him to become less aggressive. She willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was somewhat traumatic, and that she was somewhat scared and quite angry during the experience. She very much regrets the experience. She told her partner about the experience. She said that she was somewhat responsible for the experience, and that he was only a little responsible. She defined this experience as *not* sexual assault.

The last case would more easily be identified as sexual assault than the first two because it involved multiple and active resistance, however, this woman indicated that she also became aroused and the man became less aggressive. None of these cases was defined as sexual assault, however all could be considered coercive given the strategies used, and the effects of the experience on the women. It is interesting to note that all of these women indicated that unwanted sex had occurred previously in the relationships, which suggests that something about the relationship itself may contribute to the women's inability to identify these experiences as assault. The vignettes do not provide enough context to accurately assess this, suggesting that this is an area that requires further investigation. One woman provides an interesting insight into her unwanted sexual experience.

ID380 "In cases where you are seeing (dating) someone it is still possible to experience unwanted advances. I continued because I didn't want to disappoint them and thought that if I gave in it didn't matter."

This young woman clearly illustrates the way in which women put others' needs before their own. In this case, she gave in to unwanted sex because she didn't want to disappoint her partner and "thought that if I gave in it didn't matter." This qualitative response shows the ways in which women internalize their devalued status in society. As long as women think that giving in to unwanted sex doesn't matter, coercive sex will remain normative and hidden. Only one male aggressor reported an experience in which he used sexual arousal and gave false information to obtain sex.

ID712 A 20 year old man reported an experience that occurred in the year prior to the study in another person's home. She was a date, whom he knew very well, and with whom he had previous consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. He had unwanted sex with her five or more times prior to this experience. Both people were drinking during the experience. She did not give initial consent for sex and then change her mind. She was a little clear that sex was not wanted. He was quite aggressive, and was so sexually aroused he could not stop himself, and he used false information to obtain sexual intercourse. He did not suffer or inflict any physical damage. She responded to the situation by reasoning pleading or quarrelling, and did *not* become aroused. Her response had no effect on him. He did engage in sex with her again. The experience was not at all traumatic for him, and he did not feel scared or angry during the experience. He somewhat regretted the experience. He said he was a little responsible, and she was somewhat responsible for the experience. He did not define the experience as sexual assault.

This case appears to be coercive since the man gave false information to obtain sex. It is not clear, however, what this false information was. He was also quite aggressive, and her verbal resistance had no effect on him. He does indicate that he regretted the experience somewhat. It is not clear why the man regretted the experience, and this information could be important to understanding sexual coercion from the male perspective. One male victim reported an experience involving similar strategies.

ID877 A 22 year old male reported an experience that occurred in a public place one year prior to the study. The experience occurred with a nonromantic acquaintance, whom he knew very well, and with whom he had engaged in previous consensual sex going as far as sex acts. He also encountered unwanted sex with her three times prior to this experience. Intoxicants were not involved. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and he was a little clear that sex was not wanted. She was quite aggressive, she was so sexually aroused he could not stop her, and she used false information to obtain sex acts. He did not suffer any physical damage. He responded to the experience by turning cold, and he did *not* become aroused. His response caused her to become less aggressive. He did engage in sex with her after this incident. The experience was not at all traumatic, but he felt a little angry and not at all scared during the experience. He did not regret the experience. He indicated that he was not at all responsible, but that she was somewhat responsible for the experience. He defined the experience as not sexual assault.

In this case the woman used false information and was so sexually aroused the man could not stop her. However, this man indicated that the experience was not traumatic, nor was he scared, nor did he regret the experience. He was, however, a little angry, which suggests that this experience might have been somewhat coercive for him.

What is interesting to note about many of these cases, regardless of the gender involved is the number of prior unwanted sexual experiences. While this may reflect the complexity of everyday sexual interactions, the variety of relationships in which these experiences occur suggests that these experiences may be regarded as normative. If this is the case, then further education is required to help students identify and define their sexual boundaries and limitations. The high number of unwanted sexual experiences occurring among students suggests that they may be relying on sex scripts and the sexual double standard to negotiate sexual interactions, which help to perpetuate the unequal

sexual status between women and men. These unwanted experiences may also reflect these students' acceptance of the normative but unequal aspect of female male relationships.

Only one female victim case involved sexual arousal combined with "other" to obtain sex.

ID577 A 22 year old female reported an experience that occurred in his home within the year prior to the study. The experience occurred with a romantic acquaintance who was also a University of Alberta faculty member, whom she knew moderately well and with whom she had previous consensual sexual intercourse. She did not know if they had engaged in unwanted sex previous to this experience. Neither were using intoxicants. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was a little clear that she did not want to have sex. He was not at all aggressive, he was so sexually aroused she couldn't stop him, and he used some "other" as a strategy to obtain sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by doing nothing. Her response had no effect on him. She willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was not at all traumatic, and that she was not at all scared or angry. She very much regretted the experience. She told no one about the experience. She said that she was a little responsible for the experience, and that he was very responsible. She defined this experience as *not* sexual assault.

While this experience occurred with a faculty member, the woman did not identify position of authority as a coercive strategy. The experience occurred within an established sexual relationship that continued after the experience. He was not at all aggressive, she did nothing, and rated the experience as not at all traumatic. She was not at all scared or angry. Although this case occurred with a faculty member, it appears to be a case of unequal sexual desire rather than assault or coercion. The sexual double standard is apparent in the way that the woman assigned more responsibility to the man than she assumed herself. Although this experience was not traumatic, and she was not scared or angry, this woman did regret this experience, which suggests that it was not altogether consensual.



## Sexual Arousal

Two cases female victim cases involved sexual arousal alone as the strategy.

ID402 A 21 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in his home two years prior to the study. The experience occurred with a nonromantic acquaintance whom she knew extremely well, and with whom she had consensual sex going as far as sex acts. She had also encountered unwanted sex with this man three times prior to this experience. She did not use intoxicants but did not know if he did. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was very clear that she did not want to have sex. He was very aggressive, and was so sexually aroused she could not stop him leading to sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by reasoning, pleading or quarrelling. Her behaviour had no effect on him. She did not willingly engage in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was somewhat traumatic, and that she was somewhat scared and angry during the experience. She very much regretted the experience. She told a friend(s), and residence personnel/roommate(s). She said that she was somewhat responsible for the experience, and that he was quite responsible. She defined this experience as *not* sexual assault.

ID988 A 20 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in his home two years prior to the study. The experience occurred with a romantic acquaintance whom she knew moderately well. No information is provided about previous sex of any kind, neither consensual or unwanted. Neither used intoxicants. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was very clear that she did not want to have sex. He was a little aggressive, and was so sexually aroused she could not stop him leading to sex acts. She suffered no physical damage. She responded to the situation by turning cold, crying and physically struggling. Her response caused him to become more aggressive. She did not willingly engage in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was a little traumatic, and that she was quite scared but not at all angry. She very much regrets the experience. She told no one about the experience. She said that she was very responsible for the experience, and that he was only a little responsible. She defined this experience as *not* sexual assault.

In both cases the sexual relationship ended after the experience, and both women reported some level of trauma, fear, anger, and regret, suggesting that these experiences were coercive. Again, these cases contribute to the growing continuum of unwanted sex experienced by women at the University of Alberta. Only one male aggressor reported an experience involving a similar strategy.

ID980 A 24 year old man reported an experience that occurred two years prior to the study in a car or a parking lot off-campus. She was a romantic acquaintance, whom he knew extremely well, and with whom he had previous consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. He had previous unwanted sex with this woman five or more times. Intoxicants were not involved. She did not give initial consent for sex and then change her mind. She was somewhat clear that sex was not wanted. He was quite aggressive, and was so sexually aroused he could not stop himself, resulting in sexual intercourse. He did not suffer or inflict any physical damage. She responded to the situation by turning cold, and by becoming aroused. This had no effect on him. He did not respond to the question about whether or not he engaged in sex with her again. The experience was a little traumatic for him, but he did not feel scared or angry during the experience. He somewhat regretted the experience. He said he was very responsible, and she was somewhat responsible for the experience. He did not define the experience as sexual assault.

This man appears to have been affected by this experience, despite the fact that he was the aggressor. The experience was a little traumatic for him and he did regret the experience. He did note that the woman became aroused as a result of the experience, and he indicated that unwanted sexual experiences had occurred several times. It is not clear from this vignette why the man regretted the experience. Did he regret it because of where it happened, or did he regret the woman's resistance, or did he regret the entire experience? These are questions that require further investigation in order to truly understand this issue.

Three male victims also reported such experiences.

ID1006 A 19 year old man reported one experience that occurred in or near a University sponsored party or dance in the month prior to the study. The experience occurred with a stranger, whom he knew slightly, and with whom he had engaged in consensual sex play before this experience. He never encountered unwanted sex with this woman prior to this experience. He was drinking and did not know if she was. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and he was somewhat clear that sex was not wanted. She was quite aggressive, and was so aroused he could not stop her, leading to sex play. He did not suffer any physical damage. He responded to the experience by doing nothing, and he did *not* become aroused. His response caused her to be less aggressive. He did not engage in sex with her after this incident. The experience was not at all traumatic, and he felt a little angry but not scared during the experience. He regretted the experience a little. He indicated that he was not at all responsible for the experience, but that she was very responsible for the experience. He defined the experience as not sexual assault.

ID958 A 23 year old man reported one experience that occurred during a University sponsored event in a bar or restaurant during the six months prior to the study. The experience occurred with a nonromantic acquaintance, whom he knew moderately well. He did not provide any information about prior sex with this woman. Both people were drinking during the experience. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and he was very clear that sex was not wanted. She was quite aggressive, and was so sexually aroused he could not stop her, leading to sex play. He did not suffer any physical damage. He responded to the experience by becoming aroused. His response caused her to stop. He did not engage in sex with her after this incident. The experience was not at all traumatic, and he did not feel at all angry or scared during the experience. He did not regret the experience. He indicated that he was not at all responsible, but that she was very responsible for the experience. He defined the experience as not sexual assault.

ID190 A 22 year old man reported an experience that occurred in the woman's home more than two years prior to the study. The experience occurred with a romantic acquaintance, whom he knew very well, and with whom he had engaged in consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. He never encountered unwanted sex with this woman prior to this experience. Intoxicants were not involved. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and he was somewhat clear that sex was not wanted. She was very aggressive, and was so sexually aroused he could not stop her, leading to sexual intercourse. He did not suffer any physical damage. He responded to the experience by turning cold, reasoning, pleading or quarrelling, and he did *not* become aroused. His response had no effect on her. He did engage in sex with her after this incident. He did not know if the experience was traumatic. He felt a little scared, and a little angry during the experience. He quite regretted the experience. He indicated that he was a little responsible, and she was very responsible. He defined the experience as not sexual assault.

All of these cases involved women who were quite or very aggressive. Two cases involved unwanted sexual touching in a public place with women that they were not romantically involved with. In both cases the man did not engage in consensual sex with the woman again. In one case the man did not become aroused, he felt a little angry about the experience, he regretted the experience a little, but did not find the experience at all traumatic. The other man appeared to have not been negatively affected by the experience at all. He became aroused, he rated the experience as not at all traumatic, he was not afraid or angry, and he did not regret the experience. The third case appeared to have more negative effects on the man than did the previous two cases. This experience occurred within the context of an established sexual relationship that continued after the experience. The woman was quite aggressive, he used verbal resistance and he did not become aroused. He did not know if the experience was traumatic, but he was

a little scared and a little angry during the experience. He quite regretted the experience. These three cases reveal that males can encounter experiences that negatively affect them. These cases are similar to those reported by female victims encountering a similar strategy. These cases actively debunk the myth of the male who is always ready and willing for sex. Two women admitted to similar strategies to obtain sex from men.

ID168 A 20 year old woman reported an experience that occurred in the month prior to the study in her home. He was a romantic acquaintance, whom she knew extremely well, and with whom she had previous consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. She had unwanted sex with the man five or more times prior to this experience. Intoxicants were not involved. The man initially consented to sex and then changed his mind. He was somewhat clear that sex was not wanted. She was quite aggressive, and was so sexually aroused she could not stop herself, resulting in sexual intercourse. She did not suffer or inflict any physical damage. He responded to the situation by reasoning, pleading or quarrelling, and the woman does not know if he turned cold or became aroused. His response caused her to become more aggressive. She did engage in sex with him again. The experience was somewhat traumatic for her, but she did not feel scared or angry during the experience. She quite regretted the experience. She said she was quite responsible and he was a little responsible for the experience. She did not know if the experience was sexual assault.

ID604 A 19 year old woman reported an experience that occurred one year prior to the study in her University residence. The man was a romantic acquaintance, whom she knew extremely well, and with whom she had previous consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. She had unwanted sex with the man five or more times prior to this experience. Intoxicants were not involved. The man initially consented to sex and then change his mind. He was a little clear that sex was not wanted. She was not at all aggressive, and was so sexually aroused she could not stop herself, resulting in sexual intercourse. She did not suffer or inflict any physical damage. He responded to the situation by doing nothing and by becoming aroused. His response had some other effect on her. She did engage in sex with him again. The experience was not at all traumatic for her, but she did not feel scared or angry during the experience. She did not regret the experience. She said she was not at all responsible and he was a little responsible for the experience. She did not define experience as sexual assault.

It is clear that the first case appeared to be much more serious than the second case. In the first case, the woman was quite aggressive, the man withdrew consent, he used verbal resistance, she became more aggressive. In this case the woman quite regretted the experience and did not know if this was sexual assault. The other case

involved a woman who was less aggressive, the man became aroused, the experience was not at all traumatic, nor regretted. It is clear that the flavour of the two experiences was quite different. It is also interesting to note that the first woman did not know if her actions constituted sexual assault. None of the male aggressors went so far as to indicate that they didn't know, all said their experiences were not sexual assault, despite the fact that some of the male cases were similar to this case. This may show that women have a keener awareness of what constitutes sexual assault, although it is difficult to make this generalization on one case.

The very small number of women reporting aggressor experiences indicates that, while women can be the aggressors, they are still likely to remain a minority. This study has indicated that while women can be aggressors and men can be victims, most victims are women, and most aggressors are men, a finding consistent with the literature.

### Other

The twelve female cases involving only "other" as the coercive strategy reveals three distinct groups. Four women defined their experiences as sexual assault. Four women said the experience was not sexual assault, but said that they strongly regretted the experience. Four women said the experience was not sexual assault, and said that they did not regret the experience or regretted it only moderately.

The first group involved three cases which would more closely match the stereotypical image of sexual assault. In two cases the man was quite aggressive, in the other he was only moderately aggressive. The women were quite or very clear they did not want sex. In all cases the women used active resistance by either physically struggling, or running away. The relationships varied between cases, as did the rated level of trauma, fear, anger and, regret. In none of these cases defined as sexual assault did the women report the experience to authorities.

ID545 A 21 year old woman reported an experience that occurred in a fraternity two or more years prior to the study. He was a date whom she knew slightly, with whom she had engaged in previous consensual sex play. She had never encountered unwanted sex with this man before. Neither person was using intoxicants. No initial consent for sex was given and then withdrawn, and she was very clear that sex was not wanted. He was quite aggressive and used some "other" strategy to obtain sex play. She did not suffer any physical harm. She responded to the experience by turning cold, and physically struggling. Her response had no effect on him. She did not engage in sex with this person again. The experience as somewhat traumatic, and she was a little scared and quite angry. She somewhat regrets the experience. She told her friends about the experience, but did not report it to authorities. She said that she was a little responsible for the experience, and that he was very responsible. She defined this experience as sexual assault.

ID265 A 30 year old female reported an experience that occurred in her home two or more years prior to the study. The man was a romantic acquaintance, whom she knew extremely well, and with whom she had engaged in consensual sexual intercourse. She did not know if she had ever encountered unwanted sex with this man prior to this experience. Neither person was using intoxicants. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was quite clear that sex was not wanted. He was quite aggressive, and used some "other" strategy to obtain sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage from the experience. She responded to the situation by turning cold, reasoning, pleading or quarrelling, crying, and by physically struggling. Her responses caused him to become more aggressive. She willingly engaged in sex with this person again after the experience. She indicated that the experience was a little traumatic, and that she was a little scared and very angry during the experience. She quite regrets the experience. She her partner about the experience, but did not report it to the authorities. She said that she was somewhat responsible for the experience, and that he was very responsible. She defined this experience as sexual assault.

ID67 A 22 year old woman reported an experience that occurred in her home two or more years prior to the study. The experience occurred with a non-romantic acquaintance, whom she knew very well. She did not provide information about previous sex of any kind, either consensual or unwanted. Neither person was using intoxicants. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she made it very clear that she did not want sex. He was somewhat aggressive, and used some "other" strategy to obtain sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the experience by turning cold, and by running away. Her response had no effect on him. She did not engage in consensual sex with this person again. She rated the experience as very traumatic, and indicated that she was quite scared and very angry during the experience. She did not respond to the question about regretting the experience. She told her partner and a friend(s) about the experience, but did not report it to authorities. She said that both were very responsible for the experience. She defined this experience as sexual assault.

The fourth case in the first group less closely resembled the stereotypical image of sexual assault. The woman was not clear she did not want sex, he was only a little aggressive, she rated the experience as only a little traumatic and said she was not scared. The one indication that this experience would be similar to the stereotypical image of sexual assault is seen in woman's response to the aggression, she turned cold

and ran away. This woman did define this experience as sexual assault, even though it did not match the stereotypical image of sexual assault.

ID556 A 19 year old woman reported an experience that happened in another person's home in the year prior to the study. The experience occurred with a nonromantic acquaintance, whom she knew moderately well. She did not provide any information about previous sex with this man. Both the man and woman were drinking. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she not at all clear that sex was not wanted. He was a little aggressive, and used some "other" strategy to obtain sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical harm. She responded to the experience by turning cold, and by running away. Her response caused him to stop. She did not have consensual sex with him again. She rated the experience as a little traumatic, and reported that she was not at all scared but was very angry during the experience. She very much regretted the experience. She told her partner, and a friend(s) about the experience, but did not report it to authorities. She said she was not at all responsible for the experience and that he was very responsible. She defined this experience as sexual assault.

The next four cases in the second group involve similar kinds of cases as the previous four. In all four cases, the women strongly regretted the unwanted sexual experience. Three of these women did not provide information about previous sex with the men, and these three women also indicated that they did not engage in consensual sex with the men after the experience. The men were moderately aggressive, and the women all responded by turning cold or doing nothing. Three women said they were not at all scared and rated the experience as only a little traumatic. One woman said the experience was very traumatic, and one woman said she was somewhat scared. All of these women labelled their experience as not sexual assault, despite the fact that they all strongly regretted the experience.

It appears that these four cases are different from the other in terms of the men's aggression and the women's response to the aggression. The men in these cases tended to be less aggressive and the women tended to use passive resistance. In general, three of these women rated the experience as less traumatic than the previous four cases. It is easy to understand why these cases were not labelled as sexual assault when compared to the previous cases in the first group. The first group more closely matched the stereotypical image of sexual assault than did the second group. It is difficult to determine if this is the only distinction between the two groups. It is impossible to

determine what "other" constitutes as a coercive strategy, which may explain the differences between the two groups. Despite the fact that none of these women labelled their experiences as sexual assault, all of them strongly regretted their experiences.

ID559 A 24 year old woman reported an experience that occurred in another person's home two years prior to the study. He was a romantic acquaintance whom she knew extremely well, and with whom she had consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. She also had unwanted sex with this man five or more times previously. Both people were using alcohol. No initial consent for sex was given and then withdrawn, and she was somewhat clear that she did not want to have sex. He was a little aggressive, and used some "other" strategy to obtain sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by turning cold. Her response caused him to stop. She willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was a little traumatic, and that she was not at all scared but quite angry. She very much regrets the experience. She told her partner about the experience. She said that she was quite responsible for the experience, and that he was very responsible. She defined this experience as *not* sexual assault.

ID608 A 20 year old woman reported an experience that occurred in her university residence more than two years prior to the study. The experience occurred with a date whom she knew slightly. No information was provided about previous sex. Both people were using alcohol at the time of the experience. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was quite clear that she did not want to have sex. He was a little aggressive, and used some "other" strategy leading to sex play. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by doing nothing. Her behaviour had no effect on him. She did not willingly engage in consensual sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was a little traumatic, and that she was somewhat scared and a little angry during the experience. She very much regretted the experience, and told no one about the experience. She said she was a little responsible for the experience, and that he was very responsible. She defined this experience as *not* sexual assault.

ID363 A 44 year old woman reported an experience that occurred in or near a university residence more than two years prior to the study. The experience occurred with a nonromantic acquaintance, whom she knew slightly. No information was provided about previous sex. Both people were using drugs and alcohol. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was not at all clear that she did not want to have sex. He was somewhat aggressive, and used some "other" strategy leading to sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by doing nothing. She did not know what effect her behaviour had on him. She did not willingly engage in consensual sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was very traumatic, but that she was not at all scared or angry during the experience. She very much regretted the experience and told no one about the experience. She said both people were very responsible for the experience. She defined this experience as *not* sexual assault.



ID15 A 20 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in her home two years prior to the study. The experience occurred with a nonromantic acquaintance, whom she knew very well. She did not provide information about previous sex with this man. Neither person used intoxicants. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was somewhat clear that she did not want to have sex. He was somewhat aggressive, and used some "other" strategy to get her to have sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by doing nothing. Her response caused him to become less aggressive. She did not willingly engage in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was a little traumatic, and that she was not at all scared but a little angry. She very much regretted the experience. She told a friend(s) about the experience. She said both people were very responsible for the experience. She defined this experience as *not* sexual assault.

The last group of four cases involve experiences that were not defined as sexual assault and were not regretted or regretted the experience only a little or somewhat. All experiences occurred within established sexual relationships, and in two cases previous unwanted sex had occurred. In all cases the men were not at all aggressive and the women responded by doing nothing or becoming aroused. This information shows these cases to be different from the other cases in the previous two groups. One woman provided a qualitative response that reflects this point.

ID466. "In a marital relationship where disinterested or being over-tired is a problem -one may go along with sex to please a partner though not really wanting to have sex. I do not consider this violation or assault & I do not have any hard feelings about it. I wish this circumstance could have been offered in the questionnaire because throughout I had the urge to explain. Thanks - now I have! I consider different levels of sexual interest a common problem in marriage."

ID466 A 41 year old woman reported an experience that occurred in her home in the six months prior to the study. It occurred with a spouse with whom she had previous consensual sexual intercourse, and with whom she also had unwanted sex with five or more times. Neither person used intoxicants. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was a little clear that she did not want to have sex. He was not at all aggressive, and used some "other" strategy to obtain sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded by doing nothing, and she did *not* become aroused. Her response had some "other" effect on him. She willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was not traumatic, and that she was not scared but a little angry during the experience. She does not regret the experience. She told her partner and some other person. She said that both were very responsible for the experience. She defined this experience as *not* sexual assault.

ID626 A 21 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in her home one year prior to the study. The experience occurred with a romantic acquaintance whom she knew extremely well, and with whom she had previous sex going as far as sexual intercourse. She had also engaged in unwanted sex with this man twice before this experience. Neither person used intoxicants. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was somewhat clear that she did not want to have sex. He was not at all aggressive and used some "other" strategy leading to sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by doing nothing and by becoming aroused. Her behaviour had no effect on him. She willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was not at all traumatic, and that she was not scared but a little angry during the experience. She does not regret the experience, and told her partner and a friend(s) about the experience. She said that she was not at all responsible for the experience, and that he was somewhat responsible. She defined this experience as *not* sexual assault.

ID506 A 21 year old woman reported one experience that occurred in his home one year prior to the study. The person was a nonromantic acquaintance, whom she knew extremely well, and with whom she had engaged in previous consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. Neither person used intoxicants. No initial consent for sex was given and then withdrawn, and she was somewhat clear that she did not want to have sex. He was not at all aggressive, and used some "other" strategy to obtain sexual intercourse. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by doing nothing. Her response had some "other" effect on him. She willingly engaged in sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was a little traumatic, and that she was a little scared and not at all angry. She somewhat regretted the experience, and told her partner about the experience. She said that neither person was responsible for the experience. She defined this experience as *not* sexual assault.

ID2 A 27 year old woman reported an experience that occurred in another person's home in the year prior to the study. The experience occurred with a nonromantic acquaintance, whom she knew very well, and with whom she had previous consensual sex going as far as sex play. Both people used alcohol. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and she was very clear that she did not want to have sex. He was not at all aggressive, and used some "other" strategy to obtain sex play. She did not suffer any physical damage. She responded to the situation by becoming aroused. Her response caused him to become more aggressive. She did not willingly engage in consensual sex with him again. She indicated that the experience was not at all traumatic, and that she was not at all scared or angry. She regretted the experience a little. She told a friend(s) about the experience. She said that both persons were very responsible for the experience. She defined this experience as *not* sexual assault.

Three male victims also reported unwanted sexual experiences involving "other."

ID977 A 25 year old man reported one experience that occurred in the woman's home two years prior to the study. The experience occurred with a romantic acquaintance whom he knew extremely well, and with whom he had engaged in consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. He had one previous unwanted sexual encounter with this woman. Intoxicants were not involved. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and he was a little clear that sex was not wanted. She was a little aggressive, and used "other" to obtain sexual intercourse. He did not suffer any physical damage. He responded to the experience by doing nothing, and by becoming aroused. His response had no effect on her. He did engage in sex with her after this incident. The experience was not at all traumatic, and he did not feel at all scared or angry during the experience. He indicated that he was not at all responsible, and that she was quite responsible for the experience. He did not answer the questions about whether or not he regretted the experience, or how he defined the experience.

ID272 A 27 year old man reported one experience that occurred in his home six months prior to the study. The experience occurred with a romantic acquaintance whom he knew very well, and with whom he had engaged in consensual sex going as far as sexual intercourse. He had five or more unwanted sexual experiences with this woman before this experience. Intoxicants were not involved. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and he was a little clear that sex was not wanted. She was somewhat aggressive, and used "other" to obtain sexual intercourse. He did not suffer any physical damage. He responded to the experience by becoming aroused. His response had some "other" effect on her. He did engage in sex with her after this incident. The experience was not at all traumatic, and he did not feel at all scared or angry during the experience. He regretted the experience a little. He indicated that he was somewhat responsible, and she was a little responsible for the experience. He defined the experience as not sexual assault.

ID960 An 18 year old man reported one experience that occurred in the woman's home in the month prior to the study. The experience occurred with a date, whom he knew extremely well, and with whom he had engaged in sex going as far as sex play. He never encountered unwanted sex with this woman prior to this experience. Intoxicants were not involved. Initial consent for sex was not given and then withdrawn, and he was not at all clear that sex was not wanted. She was a little aggressive, and used "other" leading to sex play. He did not suffer any physical damage. He responded to the experience by becoming aroused. His response had some "other" effect on her. He did not engage in sex with her after this incident. The experience was a little traumatic, and he felt a little scared but not angry during the experience. He did not regret the experience. He indicated that neither person was responsible for the experience. He defined the experience as not sexual assault.

The first two cases occurred within established sexual relationships that continued after the experience. In both cases the men were only a little clear that sex was not wanted, and they responded by becoming aroused. In both cases the men rated the experience as not at all traumatic, and indicated that they were not at all scared or angry. One man said that he regretted the experience a little. The last male case differed from the previous two. The case occurred with a date rather than a romantic acquaintance. They had engaged in consensual sex play before the experience, but the consensual sexual relationship did not continue after this experience. Although the woman was only a little aggressive, and the man responded by becoming aroused, he indicated that the experience was a little traumatic, and he was a little scared. However, he indicated that he did not regret the experience. This case was different from the others in the effect that it had on the man involved.

These cases may reflect those of women who reported unwanted sexual experiences at the lowest end of the unwanted sexual experiences continuum. Of the 12 women who reported unwanted sexual experiences due to some "other" strategy, only two reported that they did not regret the experience, nor thought the experience was traumatic. Both of these female cases occurred within established sexual relationships that continued after the experience. These cases appeared to share some similarities, suggesting that women and men can experience unwanted sex in similar contexts and for similar reasons, with similar responses and effects on the victims. In general, women who reported unwanted sexual experiences as a result of some "other" strategy, tended to report experiences that were more traumatic, in which they were scared and/or angry, and which they regretted. Four women labelled these types of unwanted sexual experiences as sexual assault, none of the men did.

Two men reported unwanted sexual experiences in which they used "other" to obtain sex.

ID596 A 34 year old male reported an experience that occurred two years prior to the study in his home. She was his wife, whom he knew extremely well, and with whom he had previous consensual sex going as far as a sexual intercourse. He had unwanted sex with her five or more times prior to this experience. Intoxicants were not involved. She did not give initial consent for sex and then change her mind. She was quite clear that sex was not wanted. He was somewhat aggressive, and used "other" to obtain sexual intercourse. He did not suffer or inflict any physical damage. She responded to the situation by becoming aroused. This had some "other" effect on him. He did engage in sex with her again. The experience was not at all traumatic for him, and he did not feel scared or angry during the experience. He did not regret the experience. He felt very responsible, and said she was a little responsible for the experience. He did not define the experience as sexual assault.

ID613 A 25 year old man reported an experience that occurred one year prior to the study in his home. She was a romantic acquaintance, who he knew extremely well, and with whom he had previous consensual sex going as far as a sexual intercourse. He had unwanted sex with her five or more times prior to this experience. Intoxicants were not involved. She did not give initial consent for sex and then change her mind. She was not at all clear that sex was not wanted. He was a little aggressive, and used "other" to obtain sexual intercourse. He did not suffer or inflict any physical damage. She responded to the situation by becoming aroused. This caused him to be more aggressive. He did engage in sex with her again. The experience was not at all traumatic for him, and he did not feel scared or angry during the experience. He did not regret the experience. He said neither person was responsible for the experience. He did not define the experience as sexual assault.

These two men also provided qualitative responses that provided further insight into their experiences as aggressors.

ID613: I believe it is too concretely structured, in cases such as mine, my partner was only not in the mood and a little romance and caressing (an act of love in this case) was the remedy for the situation. This method of arousal has also been used by herself on my person, and in both instances to the satisfaction of both parties. I do believe this is not the case in the general public and applaud this survey in the hopes that it may educate those that require this education as well as inform the victims that this is a wrongful act in society that is all too predominant.

ID596: Perhaps I'm in the tiny minority, but I don't think it odd that sometimes one's spouse will begin by not wanting sex and end up aroused and enjoying it. This survey did not, in my opinion, take that into account. Occasionally both my spouse and myself will not want sex but because we love each other enough to put our own wants aside we will have sex to please the other. This is not rape, just accommodation.

These qualitative responses did provide some insight into the reported cases of unwanted sex, categorizing them as unwanted rather than coercive or assaultive. In comparison to female victims' experiences, these cases would rank only at the lowest end of the continuum of unwanted sex.

### Summary

The cases in this section reflected experiences that would not as easily be defined as sexual assault as those in the first section. As in the first section, these cases reflected experiences that ranged along the continuum of sexual coercion. However, since many of these cases fell lower on the continuum (less coercive strategies were involved), most were not identified as sexual assault. In fact only four cases, all involving female victims and some "other" strategy, were identified as such. Three female victims and one female aggressor were unsure if their experiences were sexual assault. The remaining women and men indicated that their cases were not sexual assault. In many cases, the reported experiences may not have been identified as sexual assault, but they certainly involved elements of coercion, based on the strategies used, and the effects on the victims.

It is clear that men's reported experiences with unwanted sex, as both victims and aggressors, was different from women's reported experiences. It is not surprising that men did not report cases that would rank higher on the continuum of unwanted sex. However, the discrepancy between women's and men's reported experiences with unwanted sex may have revealed the gendered difference in perception about unwanted sex. Women's descriptions of unwanted sex encompassed a range of experiences, while males' descriptions of unwanted sex were relatively uniform. However, some similarities between genders were discovered, revealing that some men were victimized in ways similar to women, and some women were aggressive in ways similar to men. These vignettes revealed the continuum of unwanted sex, the complexity of this issue, and the structures that support it. One man who did not offer enough information to create a vignette, did offer an insightful qualitative response.

ID432 "I realize that male sexual exploitation of women is a problem in society but your definition of sex is too vague and too overlapping of normal life experience."

This man's qualitative response beautifully illustrates the hiddenness of sexual coercion, while at the same time pointing out the limitations of the questions asked in the study.

## SUMMARY

These vignettes have shown that men can encounter unwanted sexual experiences, at the hands of both women and men. However, men's experiences with unwanted sex were characteristically different from those of women. In general, women reported *more* experiences than men, and women were more likely to encounter unwanted sex involving *multiple* strategies. Women were more likely than men to experience unwanted sex because of *force, threats, a position of authority, and physical harm*. When women and men experienced unwanted sex as a result of similar strategies, intoxication, nonconsent, arousal, and "other," women's experiences often resulted in *more negative effects* than did men's experiences.

These vignettes also showed that men's and women's unwanted sexual experience can be similar in the strategies used to obtain sex, and in the effects on the "victim." In some cases, men were equally affected by the unwanted sexual experiences. In other cases the women indicated that their experiences were not traumatic, nor regretted.

A comparison of the vignettes revealed that unwanted sexual experiences among University of Alberta students ranged along a continuum of coercive experiences. In general, however, women were more likely than men to experience unwanted sex at

higher levels of coercion, and men more often experienced unwanted sex involving less serious levels of coercion. However, both women and men were found at both ends of the continuum. In general, men were less likely than women to identify their coercive strategies as sexual assault, however, women were also unable to identify many of their coercive experiences as sexual assault.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This thesis has explored women' and men's attitudes toward sexual assault and rape myths, and their experiences as victims and aggressors in unwanted sexual experiences. The results from this research provide important information and insight into the unwanted sexual experiences of students. The following is a discussion of the key points to be made about the findings of this research.

#### **CANADIAN DATA**

This study offers key insights into the unwanted sexual experiences of *Canadian* students. Most of the existing research on students' sexual coercion is American. While some research has been conducted in Canada, most notably that of Dekeseredy and colleagues, the research in this study was methodologically different, and as such, provides different and complimentary information to that previously gathered by other Canadian studies. In order to combat sexual coercion in Canada, it is necessary to understand this issue at a Canadian level rather than depending on American studies to direct change. This is particularly important given the legal differences between the two countries. As suggested in the introduction of this thesis, as the legal definition of sexual assault changed over time to become more inclusive, the reporting rate of non-stereotypical sexual assaults increased. Despite this, none of the students in this study who labelled their experience as sexual assault reported their experiences to police or Campus Security. Many more were unable to identify their coercive experiences as sexual assault, even when these experiences reflected the stereotypical image of sexual assault. This shows that sexual assault among students has remained hidden, despite the broadening legal definition.

## **METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES**

As mentioned above, this study was methodologically different from many other studies, including the national research study conducted by Dekeseredy and colleagues, who used Koss's Sexual Experiences Survey to measure unwanted sex among Canadian students. Although this difference was discussed more fully in the methodology section of this thesis, it bears mentioning again. The students in this study were able to report on separate unwanted sexual experiences and to report the variety of coercive strategies used to obtain sex. This difference in methodology alone allowed for a more complete picture of individual experiences than that offered by Koss and colleagues, and Dekeseredy and colleagues. This study also allowed both women and men to respond as both victims and aggressors, which again offered a more complete examination of unwanted sex among students. No other Canadian study has offered such an inclusive exploration of students' experiences with unwanted sex. Again, this broader exploration of the study is vitally important to the understanding and eradication of sexual coercion in Canada.

Perhaps most importantly, this study used a new methodological tool, the vignette analysis. This technique reconstructs quantitative data to reveal new insights about an issue which may not be available with existing data sources. The vignette analysis is important for many reasons, not the least of which is that it offers an economical tool for researchers who do not have the resources or time to gather new data, but who do have access to an existing quantitative data set. This analysis was used in this study to reconstruct aggregate data to create individual cases, which offered further insight into the issue of unwanted sex. This analysis offered several important insights not available from the quantitative data analysis alone.

## **CONTINUUM OF UNWANTED SEX**

Muehlenhard et al. (1992) suggest that male-female relations exist on a continuum from consensual, to coercive, to aggressive. The vignettes in this study confirmed this continuum. University of Alberta students reported unwanted sexual experiences that ranged along the continuum. Students reported unwanted sex that did not involve fear or anger, and that was not traumatic nor regretted, which suggests that despite the fact that these experiences were unwanted, they were also likely consensual. Students also reported experiences that appear coercive but may not have been assaultive. For example students reported experiences in which they had unwanted sex, involving a wide variety of coercive strategies, that were traumatic, in which they felt varying levels of fear and/or anger, and which they regretted. These vignettes revealed that these experiences were both unwanted and coercive, however, whether they can be considered assaultive is open to debate. Students also reported experiences that were labelled as assault. The vignettes offered insight into the range of assaultive, coercive, and unwanted sexual experiences of University of Alberta students, which could not be gleaned from the quantitative data analysis alone.

### **Female Male Differences**

An attempt was made to examine both men's and women's experiences with unwanted sex as both victims and aggressors. While the vignette analysis was similar for both males and females, and for both victims and aggressors, the results revealed substantial differences between female's and male's reports of unwanted sex. Female victims' experiences ranged all along the continuum, from assaultive, to coercive, to unwanted, while male victims and male aggressors reported experiences that tended to cluster around the unwanted end of the continuum.

Not only did female victims reported *more* unwanted sexual experiences than either male victims or male aggressors, they were also more likely to report *more serious* types of coercion, such as physical force, threats, intoxication, a position of authority, physical harm, and withdrawn consent, as well as *multiple strategies* to obtain sex. Female victims also reported a *wider range of sexual behaviours* obtained during their experiences. On the other hand, male victims and aggressors reported *fewer* unwanted sexual experiences, that involved *less serious* forms of coercion, including sexual arousal, verbal strategies, and "other" strategies, and that involved only *single strategies*. As well, male aggressors were more likely to report unwanted sexual experiences that involved *sexual intercourse*, suggesting that men may not consider other forms of sexual behaviour worth reporting. Females were also more likely than men to report that their experiences were traumatic, that they experienced fear and anger, and that they regretted the experience. It is important to note that the vignettes also picked up on male victims and male aggressors whose experiences could be considered coercive and assaultive. In general, however, the vignettes revealed male and female experiences that reflected the expected pattern of aggression and victimization.

The vignette analysis provided further insight into these experiences than was available with the quantitative analysis alone. The difference in experiences offers important information for Canadian researchers. While gender differences in unwanted sex have been found using American data, this is the first Canadian data to reveal the substantial differences between women and men with regard to unwanted sex. These differences hint at the structural inequalities between men and women in Canada. These structural inequalities are further flushed out in the comparison of Canadian students' attitudes and experiences.

## ATTITUDINAL FINDINGS

This study explored University of Alberta students' attitudes toward sexual assault and rape myths. Although this issue has been explored extensively in the United States, no similar studies exist for Canada. As a whole, University of Alberta students tended to reject the myths associated with sexual assault and rape. Attitudinal differences between males and females were found, as suggested by American literature. Women were significantly, and in some cases substantially more likely than men to reject these myths. However, this study also found significant differences between victimized and nonvictimized females, a finding contrary to that suggested in American literature. This study also found very few differences between aggressive men and nonaggressive men, again, a finding contrary to American data. It is impossible to determine if the differences in results between this study and other American data is due to cultural differences, or if the findings in this study are simply anomalies. It is clear that this is an area that requires further Canadian research.

This study also found that female victims tended to reject sexual assault myths more strongly than other group of students, which would lead one to believe that female victims should have the broadest and most inclusive definition of what constitutes sexual assault. Despite this, many women in this study were unable to identify their own coercive experiences as sexual assault, even when those experiences reflected the stereotypical image of sexual assault. It appears that despite the profession of educated attitudes toward sexual assault and rape, many women continue to rely on narrow stereotypical definitions of sexual assault to define their own experiences. Evidence of this was also shown in the quantitative analysis of female victims which revealed that those experiences defined as sexual assault matched the stereotypical image of sexual assault more closely than did the group of women who did not know if their experience was sexual assault and the group of women who said their experience was not sexual assault.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The implications of this study are clear, women's experiences continue to remain hidden because of the narrow cultural belief about what constitutes "real" sexual assault. Some evidence also exists of the hiddenness of men's sexual assault. In the male vignettes that should have been identified as sexual assault, none were, which suggests that men may also rely on the narrow definition of sexual assault which excludes their experiences.

Despite decades of legal changes which relaxed certain rules of evidence and slowly recognized the inviolability of women's bodies, concerns about sexual and moral character dominated criminal proceedings. A vast array of misogynist cultural stereotypes, about 'designing women,' overwhelming male passion, and other components of the sexual double standard, shaped both the social and self definition of rape. (Dubinsky, 1993: 30).

Although Dubinsky was talking about Eastern Canada from 1880 to 1929, this statement may be as true for modern Canada as it was for historical Canada. Further evidence of this exists in the way that University of Alberta students did not reject certain myths as strongly as others. Students were less likely to reject the myth that men have a biologically stronger sex drive than women, that women who have sex too readily are "loose," and that women falsely report rape to draw attention to themselves. Of particular importance, students were least likely to reject the myth that "In order to call a sexual situation sexual assault, force must be used," suggesting that students accept the stereotypical image of sexual assault involving force. This suggests that many students rely on the use of force to label or identify sexually coercive experiences as sexual assault, a finding consistent with American literature. It appears that the social and self definition of sexual assault continues to reflect and perpetuate the unequal status of women in Canadian society.

It is possible that the gap between attitude and experience may be explained by the limited value of measuring students' attitudes. Cook (1995) found that despite the

fact that students "overwhelmingly rejected the use of violent and coercive behaviour . . . a surprising number . . . *expected this type of behaviour*," a finding stronger for women than for men (181, italics added). Cook (1995) suggests that students may offer "politically correct" rather than internalized responses to attitudinal tests (182). Cook argues that the expectation of sexual coercion may prevent women from identifying this as outside of normative male-female relations and as such may not report the experience. This is an important distinction, one which needs to be explored at a Canadian level. Regardless of whether students accept or expect sexual coercion, the result is the same, women are disproportionately affected by these beliefs.

The results from this study clearly indicate that women experience unwanted sex in ways substantially different from that reported by men, a finding consistent with American data. Male aggressors tended to report only those experiences that were unwanted rather than coercive or assaultive. It is possible that males on the University of Alberta campus are not the perpetrators of the coercive and assaultive experiences reported by the female victims in this study. It is probably more likely that the men who were coercive and assaultive opted out of the study altogether. Perhaps those males who did report unwanted sexual experiences as aggressors are to be applauded for their courage. Although in many cases they reported experiences which were unwanted and in which the women became aroused, some men revealed that they regretted the experience and that they felt angry during the experience. Although these cases do not encompass the more serious forms of coercion reported by women, they do offer some insight into the complexity of sexual relations for both women *and* men. It is impossible to determine if the discrepancy in reported aggression by men and the reported victimization of women in this study reflects these men's inability to identify their own behaviour as coercive or if these men are truly reporting only those experiences that are unwanted and not coercive or assaultive. It is necessary to conduct future research in direct comparisons of paired women and men sexual experiences to explore this issue further.

Despite attempts to include male victims' experiences, the reported cases in this study show that very few men experience unwanted sex in the way that women do. It is possible that the cultural restrictions which make it difficult to be a male victim prevented men from reporting their experiences. If this is the case, then men have as much stake in challenging the patriarchal system as women to reveal hidden experiences. This study found very few female aggressors, which indicates a discrepancy between male reports of victimization and female reports of aggression, a finding consistent Anderson & Aymami's (1993) finding that "males reported experiencing female initiation more frequently than females reporting initiating" (335).

## **EDUCATION**

The results from this study which reveal the hiddenness of sexual assault among University of Alberta students suggests that there is need for education to "overcome denial and to encourage an attitudinal shift toward acknowledging the existence of" sexual assault among students (Sandberg et al., 1987: 310). The misconceptions about sexual assault can be changed through education if the program involves "knowledge of existing attitudes and beliefs (which) enabled the designers and facilitators to structure messages and develop a delivery system that students could respond to" (Anderson et al., 1991: 138). The information from this study can be used for just that purpose by offering a clearer University-specific picture of students' experiences with unwanted sex. Although the experiences reported in this study occurred among students, the entire campus community, including students, faculty, staff, and administrators would benefit from education examining their roles in combatting sexual coercion. The community should be made aware of the continuum of unwanted sex experienced by students, as well as the discrepancy between women's and men's experiences along this continuum. However, "simply providing information about who is victimized and how to avoid being a victim will have little impact on students who do not feel vulnerable or who do not perceive the seriousness of the threat" (Gray et al., 1990: 220). This may explain the relative lack



of success some programs have had in changing males' attitudes toward this issue (see for example Borden et al., 1988; Sandberg et al., 1987).

The information from this study can also be used to illustrate how difficult it is to define an experience as sexual assault because of the structural and situational factors that keep such experiences hidden. In particular, the community need to become aware of how they may rely on the stereotypical image of sexual assault to determine what acts constitute sexual assault. Vignettes from this study can be used to show the difficulty students have in identifying their own experiences as sexual assault, as well as the wide range of experiences that *were* defined as sexual assault, which challenges the stereotypical image of sexual assault. The University of Alberta is to be applauded for its efforts in providing both a Sexual Harassment Officer and a Sexual Assault Centre on campus. Personal communication with these offices indicates that they provide a necessary service to the community. Rajacich et al., (1992) offer a comprehensive exploration of further possible institutional responses to this issue for Canadian campuses.

## CONCLUSION

Despite social change over time, and despite the University's commitment to change, it is clear that sexual assault is a problem among University of Alberta students. One of the challenges in creating real change is in revealing the ways in which sexual aggression is linked to the natural order of male-female relationships (Lisak, 1991). Many of the factors associated with the stereotypical image of sexual assault are grounded in gendered behaviour. This "gendered dualism (male/female, powerful/weak, perpetrator/victim)" (White & Kowalski, 1994: 504), creates a trap that hides women's strength and men's vulnerability. It is important to reject the simplistic view that all men are uncontrollably sexually aggressive and all women are helpless victims requiring protection from men, which stems from the social purity movement in early twentieth-century Canada. Requests for more restrictive rules regarding sexual behaviour may

only serve to reinforce the historically and culturally embedded patriarchal control over women's sexuality (Willis, 1994; Dubinsky, 1993; Chapman, 1984). Patriarchal assumptions about how women and men "should" be or act are harmful to both genders, although the harm may be experienced in different ways. Women are harmed by being assaulted, by being blamed for their assaults, and by having their sexuality restricted because of moralistic beliefs about "appropriate sexual behaviour." Men are harmed because they are not allowed to be vulnerable, because they must always be ready and willing for sex, and because they bear the brunt of women's anger against a system that is predominantly male. Both women's and men's reality has been denied by a patriarchal culture that benefits by the unequal stratification of work and power in Canadian society. What persists is:

the stubborn cultural assumption that men have the right to define the sexual norms women must conform to; men's resistance to acknowledging or accommodating women's demands for changes in those norms; the corollary assumption that men's views of what goes on between women and men is reality; while contrary views expressed by women are oversensitive, dishonest, vindictive, or crazy (Willis, 1994: 71).

It is absolutely essential to challenge these stubborn cultural assumptions in order to eliminate sexual coercion and other forms of sexual inequality in society. Canada has long been regarded as one of the best places to live in the world, however, a recent evaluation by the United Nations indicated that sexual inequality between women and men continues to exist in Canada today (Graham, 1995: A1). Sexual assault and sexual coercion are necessarily a part of that inequality, and all forms of discrimination and inequality must be addressed in order to eliminate sexual violence against both women and men. The University of Alberta has made some important steps toward addressing the issue of sexual assault and sexual coercion on campus. It is clear from this research however that much work remains to be done to reveal the embeddedness and hiddenness of sexual coercion in society.

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