

## Date Rapists: Differential Sexual Socialization and Relative Deprivation

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*Deviant sexual behavior has often been portrayed as the consequence of the frustration of legitimate sexual outlets. This study of date rapists reveals that these men, as a result of a hypersexual socialization process, are sexually very active, successful, and aspiring. These exaggerated aspiration levels are seen as responsible for instituting a high degree of sexual frustration. This acute relative deprivation, it is hypothesized, is a significant process responsible for precipitating these rape episodes.*

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**KEY WORDS:** rape; date rape; sexual exploitation; sexual socialization.

### INTRODUCTION

There is a long tradition among a number of academic disciplines of attributing sexual deviance to a paucity of legitimate sexual outlets. The central theme is that deviance is an adaptation to the frustration of the "normal" sex drive. For example, the hoboes' homosexual activities and their association with prostitutes have been seen as the consequence of a nonmarital existence (Anderson, 1923). Cohen (1961) observed that Jamaican girls can turn to homosexuality when deprived of heterosexual intercourse for prolonged periods. Others have depicted deviant sexual adaptations in sex-segregated penal institutions (Fishman, 1934; Clemmer, 1958; Sykes, 1958; Lockwood, 1980) and in areas having distorted sex ratios (Wheeler, 1960). Perhaps the most frequently heard justification for legalized prostitution focuses on its ability to curtail rape. Bonger (1916) long ago viewed unemployment and the resultant inability to marry as conditions precipitating rape.

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Psychiatrists have also held that sexual frustrations can result in explosive sexual expressions (Cohen *et al.*, 1971; Guttmacher, 1951; Karpman, 1954). Recently, some criminologists have strongly implied that rape is the consequence of the male's inability to acquire sexual activity legitimately (Clark and Lewis, 1977). And lastly, trying to explain the differential rape rates of Boston and Los Angeles, sociologists have applied the concept of relative frustration (Chappell *et al.*, 1977). Essentially, they contend that it is sexually less frustrating to be rejected by a woman in a sexually restrictive society than in a sexually permissive setting, thereby hypothesizing higher rates for the latter.

It seems in order to acknowledge that the most influential perspective today largely opposes the idea that sexual frustration is a cause of rape; this is particularly so when sexual frustration is ascribed a primary role. Thio (1983), for example, has little trouble with this issue, blankly stating, without supporting empirical evidence, that "the assumption that *sexual* frustration causes rape is hardly tenable because *nonsexual* frustration has much more to do with rape"<sup>2</sup> (p. 156). This issue will certainly not be resolved in this paper, but we will introduce an analysis of a variant rapist population, admittedly biased but probably no more so than any other studied rapist population, and make an effort to demonstrate that intellectual parochialism arising from the study of those who officially become labeled as rapists seems hardly appropriate.

In this paper we will study a group of self-disclosed rapists in order to determine whether these men are encountering difficulties in obtaining heterosexual outlets by more conventional means. Our principal objective, then, is to examine the sexual histories of rapists and nonrapists and attempt to determine if the former are more sexually deprived. It is apparent here that rape is *primarily* being examined from a sexual perspective rather than from one that views it as an expression of power and aggression. The assumption of a sexual perspective has its genesis in the nature of these acts and is not an expression of a polemic to cover all rape. Our study of this particular sample reveals all the offenses to have been date rapes and to have occurred only after intensive consensual sexual encounters between the rapists and their victims. We have argued elsewhere that a sexual framework is more appropriate to the facts regarding these men, acknowledging, of course, that in rape the power-aggression component is, in one form or another, *ipso facto* present (Kanin, 1984) and, in some cases, dominant.

<sup>2</sup>Italics are in the original.