

Rape victims—sexual scapegoats

Forcible rape is sexual intercourse without consent. It is a violent, often brutal crime.

"I'm glad I'm a fast talker. I thought he was going to kill me a couple of times," said a girl who we'll call Ann. She was raped last year on campus.

"I was scared to death, blindfolded and tied, and he was walking around the room. You are scared to the point that you can't move."

Stories by Ken Kirk

CLOSE
UP

Ann was one of the two UNL coeds who reported being raped last year. Gail Gade, chief of UNL Campus Security, said some campus rapes are unreported. Lancaster County Attorney Paul Douglas said more than half the rapes committed are unreported.

Susan Griffin wrote in the September, 1971 issue of Ramparts, "A woman who was raped in Berkeley was asked to tell the story of her rape four different times right out in the street", while her assailant was escaping. She was then required to submit to a pelvic examination to prove that penetration had taken place.

"Later, she was taken to the police station where she was asked the same questions again: 'Were you forced?' 'Did he penetrate?' 'Are you sure your life was in danger and you had no choice?' This woman had been pulled off the street by a man who held a 10-inch knife at her throat and forcibly raped her."

"She was raped at midnight and was not able to return to her home until five in the morning. In her words, 'The rape was probably the least traumatic incident of the whole evening. If I'm ever raped again...I wouldn't report it to the police because of all the degradation...'"

And the attackers...

"In Florida in 1964, I was charged with assault with intent to commit rape. But the way I was treated by the police was incredible. It was as if I was a new recruit on the force. A captain in the sheriff's office of the jail took me into his office and gave me a cup of coffee and took out his handkerchief and wet it in the sink and helped me clean up my face, which was scratched.

"He looked at me and said, 'Damn women always causing trouble for everybody.' He did not treat me like a criminal at all. And my lawyer kept asking me, 'Are you sure she didn't do things to encourage you?'" (A radio interview, KGO San Francisco reprinted in Ms., December 1972)

A UNL student, Susan, who was assaulted during a trip to Europe, said she didn't report it to police. The girl, an artist, went to the man's apartment to see some of his art work. When she got to his apartment, he attacked her.

"Why bother contacting the police? What kind of case could I present. No one forced me to go," she said.

"It's a scary thing. I just wanted to get away. I was afraid of what the man might do to me if he got a hold of me again," she added.

Susan, who now lives with her boyfriend, said she wouldn't have received sympathy from a jury. She said her morals don't live up to accepted standards.

She said other girls who she knows haven't reported being attacked because it causes a scandal. "It's not worth going through all the hassles to get revenge."

She said she wouldn't report being attacked even in Lincoln. "They would drag all my past life into the case. I don't really want it brought before the public. And maybe they'll judge that it's my fault," Susan said.

Scandal, degradation, fear of reprisal and an inability to prove the case in court help cause unreported rapes.

Although unhappy with police questioning, court appearances and defense questions about her morals, Ann said, "there's no other way you can do it. It's due process of the law."

The attackers of the two UNL girls, who reported being raped last year, were convicted and are in prison. In Nebraska rapists serve at least one year with a maximum of 50 years.

Ann said she was questioned extensively by UNL Campus Security and spent hours with city police and attorneys. She also made three court appearances.

She said the trial was horrible, but less disturbing than the attack. "Anything would have been better. At least then (the trial) I knew that I wasn't going to be killed," Ann said.

She said she received "a lot of shit" for not putting up a fight. But, she said, it was such a physical mismatch that "It would have been stupid to defend myself."

She also said that because she was white and her attacker black, "the defense attorney tried to make me look like a rich little white girl, who couldn't tell one black from another."

Ann's attacker had been accused before, she said, but the girl always withdrew the complaint before the trial because of pressure from him. She said she received "a lot of shit" from blacks after the incident.

Her rape was responsible for the increased dormitory security measures taken last year, she said.

Gade said that after a rape is reported, UNL Campus Security attempts to get as much information from the victim as her emotional state will allow. He said they get a description of the assailant, where it happened and when, so they can search the area immediately.

He said they must determine whether the claim is legitimate. A pelvic examination is necessary to determine intercourse. He said they never take a negative attitude toward the victim, they always try to believe her story.

Douglas said rape is easy to allege, but difficult to prove in court especially with no bruises or torn clothes. He said the defense attempts to show that the girl has poor morals, consented, that she enticed the attacker, that no intercourse took place or that the accused wasn't the attacker.

In a recent ruling, the Nebraska Supreme Court said that a woman about to raped only has to make "reasonable resistance in good faith" in order for her assailant to be convicted of rape.

The court's ruling upheld the conviction of Richard Campbell for raping a UNL student last year. She claimed he threatened to beat her unless she submitted. Campbell's defense was that she had not resisted "to the utmost."

Supreme Court Judge Hale McCown said: "Where resistance would obviously be useless, futile or foolhardy, it is wholly unrealistic to require affirmative direct demonstration of the utmost physical resistance as proof of the female's opposition and lack of consent."

Douglas said the rape trial is traumatic, but he knows of no other way to pursue it. He said rape is distasteful to talk about on a witness stand in front of a judge and jury, but not as distasteful as other crimes, such as sodomy.

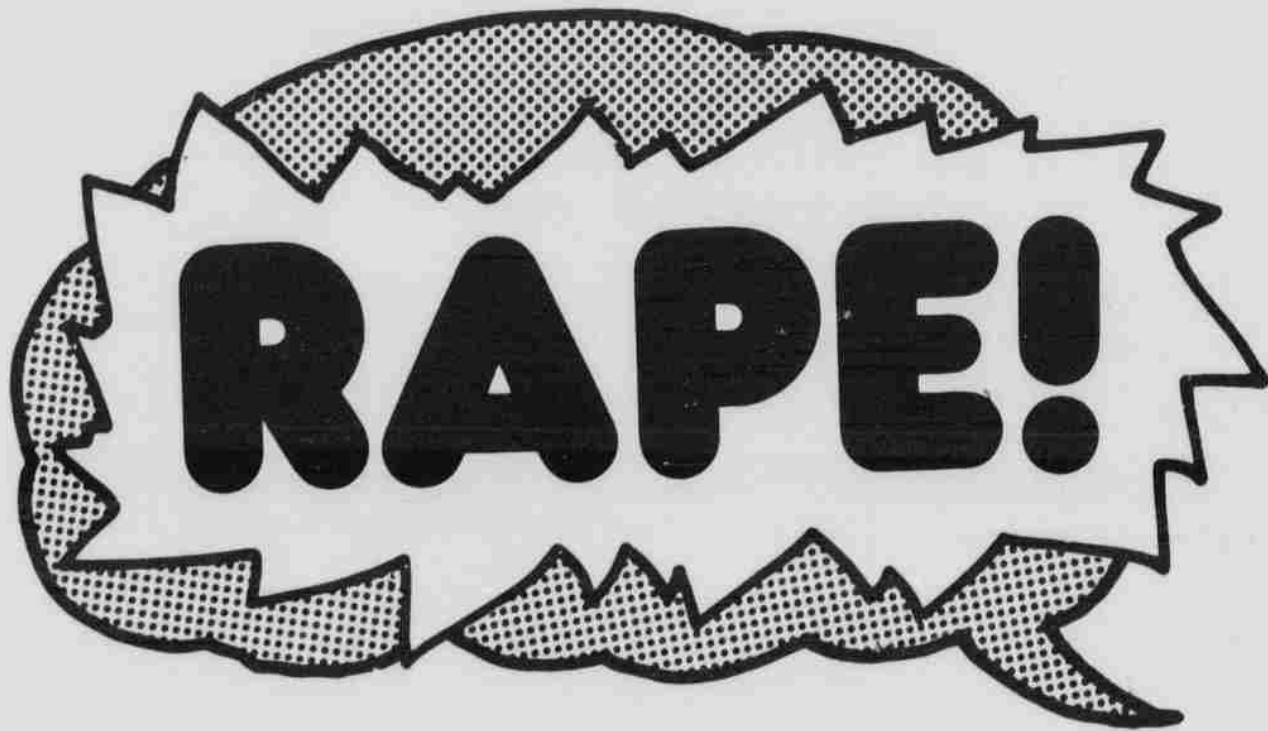
He said the victim usually doesn't know the attacker. But when the two have had sexual relations before and the girl claims she was raped, Douglas said, it is difficult to prove.

Gade said sometimes a girl will allege rape when she has consented. He said it usually is done out of fear of pregnancy or for revenge against a boyfriend, who has hurt her.

He said the average 18 or 19 year old is reluctant to discuss the gory details of the attack with male police officers. He said Campus Security will have a policewoman handle rape cases in the future.

Gade said the two rapes last year were the first reported in at least 10 years. Gade said he would cooperate with and maintain the confidence of any girl who reports a sexual assault.

"It takes a lot of nerve to report a crime of this type, but it's the right thing to do...to try to get him before he attacks somebody else," Gade said.



Portrait of a rapist as a lover

The typical rapist has little success at marriage usually with a short courtship and a short marriage, according to James Cole, UNL associate professor of psychology.

According to research on sexual offenders in

Preliminary crime statistics for 1972 show a 11 per cent increase in the number of forcible rapes reported. A 19 per cent increase in reported rapes occurred in suburban areas, according to the FBI Uniform Crime Reports.

In 1972 violent all crimes increased one per cent, while the number of all crimes reported dropped three per cent. There was a five per cent increase in the number of forcible rapes reported in 1971.

Lancaster County Atty. Paul Douglas said 208 rapes were reported in Nebraska in 1971.

prison, Cole said, 25 to 30 per cent of rapists are violent and aggressive. For them hostility is necessary for sexual satisfaction, he said.

Many of these men are impotent and, because of their impotence, fear women, which causes hostility. This type of rapist is non-discriminatory. Age or beauty make no difference to him, Cole said. Often this type also is involved in non-sexual violent crimes, he said.

According to Cole these men justify rape by saying the woman gave in or that she enjoyed it, which is often a deliberate distortion. He said they mistake a victim's fear as pleasure.

Amoral delinquents makeup about 10 to 15 per cent of the rapists now in prison, Cole said. This type of rapist sees women as sexual objects which provide sexual release and wants them without guilt. Cole said these men rely mainly on threats, but resort to violence when necessary.

Cole said the most dangerous rapist is the passive, model adolescent, straight "A" type who explodes in a fit of sexual aggression. While these psychotic sex offenders compose a small proportion of the rapists in prison, they are the most dangerous because they are unpredictable and often kill their victims.

Another category of rapists could be considered the double-standard aggressor, Cole said. This type believes that there are good and bad women. They respect good women, but think that they can take advantage of bad women.

Another type of convicted rapist is the man who was at the wrong place at the wrong time, Cole said. A woman may consent to intercourse, but because she is disturbed or suffers guilt feelings, she might claim rape, he said.