

Rape adaptations

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Why do men rape women?

Rape is a common aggression in the animal world. But if ourselves, as human kind, are rational animals, why does this kind of horrendous aggression against women keep happening? There are different theories in relation to rape: neuropsychological theories, psychological theories, feminist theories and evolutionary theories. Our focus is going to be on the evolutionary and feminist ones.

Evolutionary theories: Rape can be an adaptation or a by-product of natural selection. This idea comes from Trivers parental investment theory (1972). On the one hand, Trivers theory explains that females invest a huge amount of time and energy in each offspring, therefore they are more selective when it comes to find a partner. On the other hand, males are more indiscriminate when it comes to sexual partners and they only care about mating with any fertile female. This leads to a sexual conflict between males and females, this conflict may lead to the males use of force in order to get sexual access to females.

Feminist theories: these theories can explain rape from a different point of view. As the feminist anthropologist Barbara Smut claims: "men use aggression to try to control women, and particularly to try to control female sexuality, not because men are inherently aggressive and women inherently submissive, but because men find aggression to be a useful political tool in their struggle to dominate and control women and thereby enhance their reproductive opportunities". These theories argued that the ultimate goal of sexual aggressions is gaining control over female sexuality and reproduction.

Human male rape adaptations

Barbara Smuts in 1992 proposed different hypothesis of male aggressions toward women:

- Hypothesis 1: Male aggression toward women is more common when female alliances are weak.
- Hypothesis 2: wife beating is more common when females lack support from natal kin.
- Hypothesis 3: Male aggression toward women is more common when male alliances are particularly important and well-developed.
- Hypothesis 4: female vulnerability to wife beating will generally increase as male relationships become less egalitarian.

- Hypothesis 5: women will be more vulnerable to male aggression if male control of resources increases.

The majority of men adaptations to rape are psychological mechanisms, as Thornhill and Palmer argued in 2000:

- Psychological mechanisms that help males evaluate the vulnerability of potential rape victims.
- Psychological mechanisms that motivate men who lack sexual access to females (or who lack sufficient resources) to rape.
- Psychological mechanisms that cause male to evaluate sexual attractiveness (as indicated by age) differently for rape victims than for consensual partners.
- Psychological or other mechanisms that motivate males to engage in rape under conditions of sperm competition.
- Psychological mechanisms that produce differences between the sexual arousal of males caused by depictions of rape and that caused by depictions of consensual mating. The analysis from Lohr, Adams and Davis in 1997 indicated that sexually coercive males have a lower threshold for arousal to sexual cues and did not inhibit sexual arousal when force cues were introduced (Fig. 1).

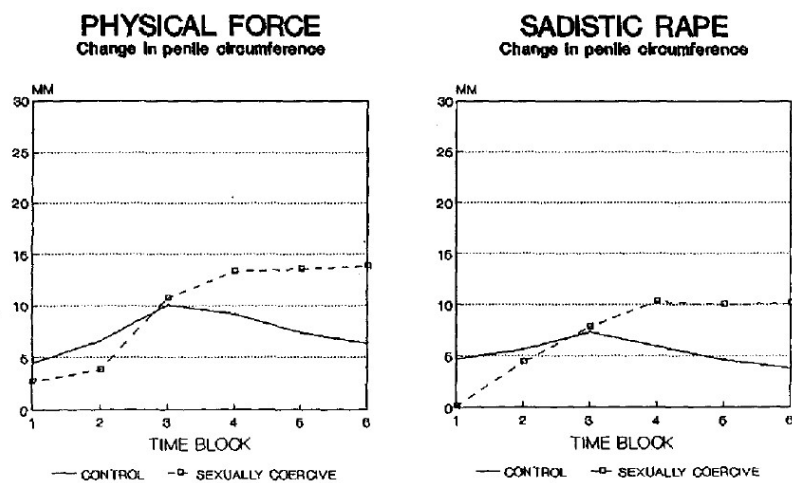


Fig 1. Change in penile circumference by group and time block for physical force, and sadistic rape with audioape- slide stimuli.

So as we can see, men do not have an evolved sexual psychology that functions to increase sexual access to females; they have an evolved coercive sexual psychology that functions to that effect.

Human female anti-rape adaptations

Females have developed a variety of strategies against male sexual coercion:

- Females band together against males.

- Women form long term friendly relationships with males → the bodyguard hypothesis
- Induced abortion: Davis and Gallup suggested in 2006, preeclampsia and spontaneous abortion might be adaptations to end pregnancies not in the woman's best reproductive interests, like those resulting from rape.
- Increase in handgrip strenght during the fertile phase of their menstrual cycle. Petralia and Gallup in 2002 demostrated that under a sexual coercion scenario and in the fertill phase of the menstrual cycle, women increases their handgrip strenght (Fig. 2).

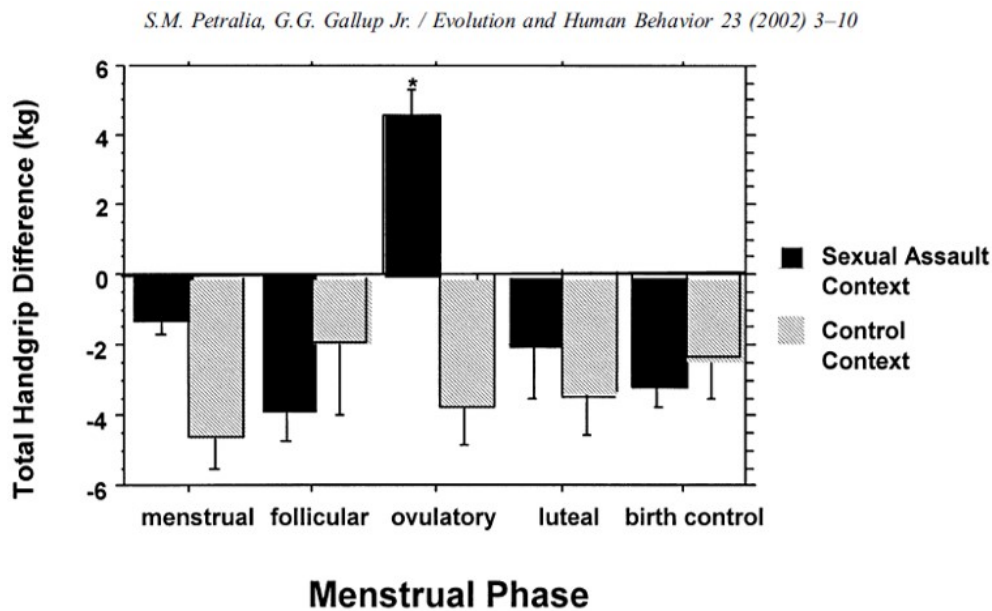


Fig. 2.. Difference between the pretreatment handgrip and the average of the two posttreatment handgrips combined for the dominant and nondominant hands. Asterisk indicates significant difference from all other groups, $P < .001$.

Discussion

The question of whether or not rape-specific adaptations exist in our species in no way implies that rape is inevitable, acceptable or should be treated as anything other than a horrible crime to be prevented and punished. To think otherwise is to commit the naturalistic fallacy: the erroneous conclusion that what is “natural” or therefore “good” or justifiable (Thorhill and Palmer, 2000).

From an evolutionary point of view, rape might be an adaptation for men. Rape from a male point of view might seem a feasible strategy, but it is not an evolutionary stable strategy. We have focused on rape from a male point of view, but rape has negative effects on the female fitness and on the offspring. Rape may result in the production of genetically inferior offspring. In addition, paternity certainty is lowered for the victim's long-term mate and reduces the fitness of the relatives of the victim and her long-term. Further reproductive costs include injuries, sexually transmitted diseases and disruption of parental care for the victim's existing children, caused by a lack of paternal investment from the rapist and/or that a raped woman may be abandoned by her long-term partner (Prokop, 2013).

Here we have seen and approach to the kinds of adaptations that men have in relation to rape, and the adaptations that women have had to evolve because of it. If rape was and evolutionary stable strategy women would not have anti-rape strategies such the increase of handgrip strength in a sexual coercion scenario.

As a general conclusion I would like to explain that it have been difficult to find recent articles (the most current article is from 2013) about rape with a feminist point of view. The vast majority of the articles used for this research have been written by men with lack of feminist and gender perspective. This implies that further research is needed, most important, feminist research is needed

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