Dynamics of Sexual Assault
When were these quotes written?

- Where a vigorous woman alleges ravishment it is to be expected that signs of violence such as wounds, bruises and scratches will be present and their absence should induce a moderate degree of skepticism unless the girl avers that she fainted from fear, became panic stricken or was otherwise rendered incapable of physical resistance. The acts and demeanor of the female immediately after the alleged commission should be subjected to very critical investigation in these cases.

- Generally, the actions and the appearance of a legitimate rape victim leave little doubt that a crime has been committed. Under such circumstances, the victim is highly agitated, emotionally distraught, often in a state of hysteria and may have sustained injuries, cuts, bruises or wounds. The victim’s clothing is often ripped or torn off as evidence that it was forcibly removed and if the rape occurred outdoors, the victim is generally thrown to the ground and her outer garments stained or

Successfully Investigating Acquaintance Sexual Assault: A National Training Manual for Law Enforcement
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Reasons for the cultural myths

• The stereotype used to more accurately reflect characteristics of reported rape.
• The media portrays stereotypic cases.
• We prefer to keep issues “black and white.”
• We want to feel safe from the threat of rape.
Consequences of the cultural myths

- Victims are not believed.
- Cases are not investigated appropriately.
- Offenders may repeat their crime.
How many people experience completed or attempted rape?

• 1 out of 6 women in the U.S.

• 1 out of 33 men in the U.S.

Source: National Violence Against Women Study (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998).
Basic characteristics of adult sexual assault

- Most victims are female.
- Most perpetrators are male.
- Most victims are raped by someone they know.
- Most rapes do not cause visible physical injury.

Source: National Violence Against Women Study (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998).
Other characteristics of sexual assault

- Many women are repeatedly victimized.
- Most female victims are under 24 years old.
- Most victims do not report to police.

Source: National Women’s Study (National Victim Center, 1992)
Still more characteristics of sexual assault

- Most rapes do not involve a weapon
  - Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics

- Most rapes involve alcohol use.
  - Source: Koss, 1988; Koss, Gidycz & Wisnewski, 1987; Koss & Cook, 1993
Conclusions

• Law enforcement must understand the dynamics of sexual assault to investigate effectively.

• Some of the actual characteristics of sexual assault have traditionally been seen as cues for suspicion.

• All sexual assault claims should be assumed to be valid and investigated accordingly.