

***Synopsis:** Myth about rape have endured for centuries. Even in this so-called ‘enlightened’ age, rape myths persist and often make successful prosecution of the perpetrator difficult.*

Rape Myths Persist Despite So-Called ‘Enlightenment’

New York City police officers are having a difficult time investigating a 62-percent surge in sexual assaults in Brooklyn.

It may be because law enforcement is embracing harmful misconceptions — myths — about rape.

In a recent interview with [DNAinfoon](#), the spike is because authorities are dealing with a range of allegations. For whatever reason, Captain Peter Rose put his foot in it.

“Some of them [the rape allegations] were Tinder or other hookup sites. Some were coworkers. We’re not worried about it because of 13 attacks, only two were true stranger rapes,” said Rose.

Rose’s statements sustain the troubling and ill-informed idea that some rapes are more concerning than others.

“If you have the commander of a precinct making comments like that,” said [Arkady Bukh](#), a noted New York criminal defense lawyer, “he’s placing the tone for all the officers under his command and they understand about how seriously to take rape cases.”

Rape myths became a research subject in the 1970s when numerous studies and books looked at the subject. In 1974, feminist writer [Susan Brownmiller](#) wrote that “male myths of rape, deliberately obscure the true nature of rape.”

The same year, Julia and Herman Schwendinger reviewed common misconceptions about [rape](#), including the idea that rape was impossible. The couple labeled these misconceptions “sexist myths” which would influence how women victims are treated.

Both Brownmiller and the Schwendingers pointed out how rape myths perpetuate male violence against women by placing the onus, or blame, on the victim while excusing the rapist.

Common Rape Myths

Some commonly myths about rape include:

- The victim's clothing can lead to sexual assault,
- Victims bear responsibility if they were drunk,
- Most rapes are committed by strangers,
- When a man pays for dinner, a woman is 'expected to reciprocate',
- It is not rape if the victim is not physically coerced or injured, and
- Rape is merely unwanted sex —not a violent crime

Sexual Assault Is Everyone's Problem

Despite rosy pictures about how [sexual assault](#) victims are treated by the criminal justice system, statistics show a bleak image. Most assaults are never reported and that makes the number of assaults hard to measure.

The [2016 National Crime Victimization Survey](#) reporters there were almost a half-million incidents of sexual assault or rape in America in 2015. Estimates from other sources place the actual number higher.

The vast majority of assaults which do get reported to law enforcement name move from initial investigation to prosecution. For victims who watch as their claims are ignored, the emotional and physical hard may last a lifetime.

In the majority of jurisdictions, law enforcement is required to make an investigation of claim to determine if there is enough evidence to refer the case to a prosecutor. The truth is up to 93% of all complaints never make it to the prosecutorial stage. The most common reason complains are dropped is law enforcement's decision not to refer them in the first place.

With the common myths appearing in many police reports, it is easy to understand the secondary victimization frequently experienced by women who

report a rape. They also highlight the need for better training and education to show how inaccurate rape myths are.

The Takeaway

Victims of sexual assault often face a long and agonizing road before seeing any type of justice. Learning to overcome the damaging myths surrounding rape is a vital first step to making real changes in the criminal justice system and society.