

# **Annotated Bibliography**

*Olivia Valone*

**Brownmiller, Susan. *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975. Print.**

Although Susan Brownmiller was not the first person to use the phrase “rape culture,” this book is credited with fundamentally changing the way people looked at rape in society. Her book focuses on the history of rape as a system of violence used by men to keep women in fear. She also examines how this long history and acceptance of rape as “natural” has caused society to blame women for their victimization.

Male conditioning influences how society views sexual encounters and perceives women’s role in such situations. Women are unconsciously forced to succumb to male sexual fantasies due to their overrepresentation within media, and are essentially pressured into certain sexual roles for men.

Brownmiller argues that the unconscious dynamics of rape history and sexual objectification of women have established what she defines as a rape culture, where women who are raped did something to “deserve it.” The book will be useful to provide a history of rape as well as the unconsciousness of the culture. It is also important to note that originally “rape culture” was a feminist term that was not widely accepted or discussed until more recently. She reshapes how we look at rape by defining it as a crime of violence and power rather than that of lust.

**Goodenough, Ward H. “Evolution of the Human Capacity for Beliefs.” *American Anthropologist* 92.3 (1990): 597–612. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Mar. 2016.**

Goodenough is an anthropologist considering how the evolution of language has shaped the ability and form of human beliefs. He begins his analysis by observing the interactions of

monkeys, and how communication evolved over time. His argument focuses on how language is more than just a system of communication.

Without language, experiences are simply subjective. Everyone would experience the color “red” in a different way. Through language, an objective experience and perception of reality is created. With words we can assign a category based in *gestalt* (a global form of thought) that references past experience and is evoked in recognition. Rape culture is a category based in rape myths which were established by historical prominence of rape and perception of women.

I found Goodenough’s arguments an especially interesting way to look at my topic. Throughout this article he stressed the availability of analogies and *gestalt* that make people perceive situations as similar. He also said that once there are names for things, through a process similar to analogy, the words can be put together to explain a certain experience. I think that this is key to understanding the language of “rape culture” and what it infers.

**Hildebrand, Meagen M. and Cynthia J. Najdowski. “The Potential Impact of Rape Culture on Juror Decision Making: Implications for Wrongful Acquittals in Sexual Assault Trials.” *Albany Law Review* 78.3 (2015): 1059-1086. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 22 Mar. 2016.**

Hildebrand and Najdowski start off their article with the information that despite the fact that one in five women will experience a form of sexual assault in their lives, only five percent of sexual assaults end with a criminal conviction. They attribute this to the permeation of rape culture in the legal system, especially to jurors. They focus on how, at the same time, rape culture pressures women not to come forward with their cases and influences juries to wrongfully neglect their cases.

Their study focuses on how rape myths and sexual objectification specifically have formed the rape culture and continue to influence the criminal justice system. Rape myths, such as “she asked for it” and “it wasn’t rape,” contribute to false convictions about rape victims and

rapists, which have created a society in which women are blamed in part for their “victimization.”

The article poses the important question: Does rape culture influence the decisions of jury? The article goes about answering this question with studies which show that juries are more likely to prosecute rape in the “traditional” sense, where a stranger or multiple individuals are perpetrating or a violent attack. Essentially rape culture defines what “real rape” is and places responsibility on women.

The article outlines the cultural dynamics that underlie a society which justifies rape through the legal system. While it does not have much to do specifically with the term “rape culture,” it is often used within the article to frame how people are starting to look at rape differently. In this way, I think this article will help to strengthen my argument. The discussion of the importance of rape myth language could also be very useful to connect culture and language.

**Powers, Rachael A. “The Impact of College Education on Rape Myth Acceptance, Alcohol Expectancies, and Bystander Attitudes.” *Deviant behavior* 36.12 (2015): 956-973. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 22 Mar. 2016.**

In this article, Powers examines the effects that rape myths have on college campus and how they shift the blame away from offenders while justifying sexual violence. She recognizes that rape reflects our societal values on a whole, but much of rape myth acceptance occurs on college campuses.

Her research indicates that older people are less likely to subscribe to rape myths, while younger people will more likely accept them and stand by as a rape occurs. She examines the linguistic roots of rape myths – that women “enjoy” it - tracing back to Greek mythology and how that has shaped current perceptions of rape.

She examines how using the rape myths have influenced and connected sexual violence and sex-role stereotyping. They have also resulted in misperceptions of what constitutes sexual assault and rape. She conducted a survey which showed that men supported more rape myths and an unwillingness of bystanders to intervene.

I think this article will be useful because of the information about how rape myths influence perception and contribute to the rape culture. They fall under the large category of communication, and it is interesting to see how the language of rape myths place the blame on the victim.

**Whorf, Benjamin Lee. *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. Ed. John B. Carroll et al.. MIT Press, 2012. JSTOR. Web. 24 Mar. 2016.**

The Whorfian Hypothesis, outlined by Benjamin Whorf in this collection of his writings, claims that one's experience of reality is shaped by language. He examines the interactions of language, culture, and psychology, and how they affect cultural and personal thoughts, behaviors, and actions. He also recognizes that linguistics play a primarily unconscious role in determining thought patterns.

He provides many examples of how words have linguistic meaning and can influence an individual's behavior. Hearing the word "gasoline drums," one would exhibit caution, and relax if they were "empty gasoline drums." In this case, "empty" suggests a lack of hazard, and the linguistics cause one to be relaxed despite the fact that explosive gas could still be present within the container.

In his analysis of language he focuses on the differences that exist between Western societies and the Hopi tribe in order to show how it affects perceptions of time, space, and substance. Across languages people cannot experience some things the same way. He also examines how the linguistics of science influence understanding.

Although his writings are not as recent as the issue I will be discussing in my paper, I think his theories of language's unconscious shaping reality will help me to analyze the linguistics and existence of rape culture. It will also help to explain why rape culture became recognizable when it was given a term. An interesting intersection is how the language of rape myths have contributed to establishing a "rape culture."