

# Exercise: Victim-blaming in cases of rape

The following exercise is intended to highlight the frequent victim-blaming that occurs in cases of rape. Imagine if the types of questions that are normally asked of rape victims were asked of a robbery victim. The following text is intended to illustrate how such an interview would then proceed.

**“Mr. Smith, you were held up at gunpoint on the corner of First and Main?”**

*“Yes.”*

**“Did you struggle with the robber?”**

*“No.”*

**“Why not?”**

*“He was armed.”*

**“Then you made a conscious decision to comply with his demands rather than resist?”**

*“Yes.”*

**“Did you scream? Cry out?”**

*“No, I was afraid.”*

**“I see. Have you ever been held up before?”**

*“No.”*

**“Have you ever GIVEN money away?”**

*“Yes, of course.”*

**“And you did so willingly?”**

*“What are you getting at?”*

**“Well, let’s put it like this, Mr. Smith. You’ve given money away in the past. In fact, you have quite a reputation for philanthropy. How can we be sure that you weren’t CONTRIVING to have your money taken from you by force?”**

*“Listen, if I wanted –”*

**“Never mind. What time did this holdup take place, Mr. Smith?”**

*“About 11:00 P.M.”*

**“You were out on the street at 11:00 P.M.? Doing what?”**

*“Just walking.”*

**“Just walking? You know that it’s dangerous being out on the street that late at night. Weren’t you aware that you could have been held up?”**

*“I hadn’t thought about it.”*

**“What were you wearing at the time, Mr. Smith?”**

*“Let’s see ... a suit. Yes, a suit.”*

**“An EXPENSIVE suit?”**

*“Well – yes. I’m a successful lawyer, you know.”*

**“In other words, Mr. Smith, you were walking around the streets late at night in a suit that practically advertised the fact that you might be good target for some easy money, isn’t that so? I mean, if we didn’t know better, Mr. Smith, we might even think that you were asking for this to happen, mightn’t we?”**

*From “The Legal Bias Against Rape Victims (The Rape of Mr. Smith).” Connie K. Borkenhagen, American Bar Association Journal. April, 1975*