

Male Rape Myths

The Role of Gender, Violence, and Sexism

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This study investigates the structure of Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson's Male Rape Myth Scale, examines gender differences in rape myth acceptance, and explores the underlying ideologies that facilitate male rape myth acceptance. A three-factor model, with rape myths regarding Trauma, Blame, and Denial as separate subscales, is the best fitting solution. However, the results indicate that additional scale development and validity tests are necessary. In exploratory analyses, men are more accepting of male rape myths than are women. Benevolent sexism toward men and acceptance of interpersonal violence are strong predictors of male rape myth acceptance for both men and women. Thus, the attitudes that facilitate rape myth acceptance against men appear to be similar to those that facilitate rape myth acceptance against women. Suggestions for future scale development are outlined and theoretical implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords: *male rape; rape myths; ambivalent sexism; acceptance of interpersonal violence*

More than 247,000 women and men in the United States were estimated as being raped or sexually assaulted in 2002 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003). Most research has focused on female victims; however, 13% (31,640) of reported rape and sexual assault victims were male (U.S.

Authors' Note: This study was conducted as a first-year project for the clinical psychology graduate program at Marquette University. The results of this study were presented in a poster at the annual meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association (May 2005). The authors would like to thank Kara Lindstedt, Angela Pirlott, and Sara Thimsen for their assistance with data collection. Please address correspondence to Kristine M. Chapleau, Marquette University, Department of Psychology, P.O. 1881, Milwaukee, WI 53201; e-mail: kristine.chapleau@marquette.edu.

Department of Justice, 2003). Although women are victimized far more often than men, the proportion of male victims compared to female victims may be skewed because of gender differences in reporting rates. While the reporting rate for women is low (e.g., Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987), preliminary results suggest that men are 1.5 times less likely to report a rape by a male perpetrator to the police than are women (Pino & Meier, 1999). This rate may be even lower when accounting for sexual assaults committed by women, although little is known about the effects of perpetrator gender on the likelihood that male victims will report sexual assault to the police.

Unfortunately, even when rape victims do report, the legal system often fails to punish the perpetrators. Justice for female sexual assault victims is often derailed by unsympathetic police officers (Campbell & Johnson, 1997), district attorneys (Frohmann, 1991), and juries (Koss, 2000). Similar data are not reported for male victims, which, given the lower reporting rate, suggests that perpetrators of male rape are also seldom prosecuted. Sexual assault is often emotionally devastating to men. Like female victims, men can experience vulnerability, depression, suicidal thoughts, sleep disturbances, social isolation, sexual dysfunction, and confusion about their sexual orientation if the perpetrator was male (Goyer & Eddleman, 1984; Groth & Burgess, 1980; Mezey & King, 1989). Furthermore, there is correlational evidence that male victims sexually coerce others as well. Russell and Oswald (2002) found that of college-aged men who reported using coercion to obtain sex, almost 63% reported having at least one experience of being sexually coerced themselves by a female partner. Thus, sexual coercion against men has serious consequences for the victims as well as for others.

In sum, male rape is problematic and currently understudied. Because male and female victims experience similar social sanctions and negative sequelae, it follows that similar social forces and ideologies work against rape victims of both genders. In this study, we investigate the extent to which people believe rape myths about male victims. Rape myths about female victims have been found to play a central role in the misperceptions and treatment of female rape victims. Similarly, we argue that there are myths about male victims of rape that need to be explored and understood. Given the limited research on male rape myths, we first examine the research on female rape victims to direct our study of biases toward male rape victims.

Rape Myths About Female Victims

For female victims, past research has shown that a primary social force in their maltreatment is rape myths (e.g., Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980; Campbell & Johnson, 1997; Du Mont, Miller, & Myhr, 2003). Rape myths are

stereotypical or false beliefs about the culpability of victims, the innocence of rapists, and the illegitimacy of rape as a serious crime (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). For example, in the development of the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, Payne, Lonsway, and Fitzgerald (1999) identified seven types of female rape myths: (a) "she asked for it"; (b) "it wasn't really rape"; (c) "he didn't mean to"; (d) "she wanted it"; (e) "she lied"; (f) "rape is a trivial event"; and (g) "rape is a deviant event" (p. 37). Although there seems to be agreement on the identification of rape myths (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994), pinpointing the underlying ideologies that facilitate female rape myth acceptance has been more challenging.

With roots in feminist theory, most of the proposed attitudinal variables relate to sexism (for a review, see Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). One of the earliest studies on this topic found that the best attitudinal predictor of rape myth acceptance was acceptance of interpersonal violence (Burt, 1980). This is the belief that "force and coercion are legitimate ways to gain compliance and specifically that they are legitimate in intimate and sexual relationships" (Burt, 1980, p. 218). Other strong predictors in Burt's study were sex role stereotyping and adversarial sexual beliefs. So participants who judged others based on rigid sex roles, thought that men and women naturally struggle for dominance, and that men should ultimately win this struggle, even if by force, were more likely to denounce female rape victims.

Updating Burt's (1980) construct of sex role stereotyping, Glick and Fiske (1996) proposed that sexism consists of two components reflecting hostile and benevolent attitudes toward women. Hostile sexism is denigrating attitudes that punish women who defy traditional gender roles (Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Werner, & Zhu, 1997). Conversely, benevolent sexism is reverent attitudes that reward women who are traditionally feminine (Glick et al., 1997). Although hostile and benevolent sexism are both stereotypical beliefs about women, they differ in prejudicial evaluations (i.e., bad and good) (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Those who have these conflicting feelings toward women resolve this conflict by categorizing individual women as either "good girls" or "bad girls" (Glick & Fiske, 1996). "Good girls" are venerated and thus worthy of chivalry; "bad girls" are denigrated and denied patriarchal protection. Glick and Fiske (1997) found that for both male and female participants, hostile sexism (but not benevolent sexism) significantly correlated with Burt's (1980) Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (using partial correlations controlling for benevolent sexism scores).

Viki and Abrams (2002), however, suggested that individuals who score higher in benevolent sexism may be more likely to blame victims of acquaintance rape for falling short of the "ladylike" standard. Consistent

with this hypothesis, benevolent sexism, but not hostile sexism, was associated with blaming victims of acquaintance rape (but not stranger rape) (Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003; Viki & Abrams, 2002) and recommendations for shorter prison sentences for acquaintance rapists (Viki, Abrams, & Masser, 2004). Viki and colleagues concluded that individuals who are high in benevolent sexism may blame acquaintance rape victims to protect their belief in a just world.

A consistent finding is that heterosexual men are more accepting of rape myths than are women (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). To explain this gender difference, Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1995) examined the role of hostility toward women in rape myth acceptance. They hypothesized that Burt's (1980) Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale and Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale share a common ideology: hostility toward women. Using revised scales that were gender neutral, they found that hostility toward women accounted for almost twice the variance in rape myth acceptance scores for men than it did for women. Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1995) concluded that rape myths serve different purposes for men and women. For men, rape myths about female victims justify men's sexual domination of women; for women, rape myths mitigate fear and feelings of vulnerability.

Rape Myths About Male Victims

Less is known about rape myths concerning male victims, but previous research has identified the following beliefs: (a) Being raped by a male attacker is synonymous with the loss of masculinity (Groth & Burgess, 1980), (b) "men who are sexually assaulted by men must be gay" (Stermac, Del Bove, & Addison, 2004, p. 901), (c) "men are incapable of functioning sexually unless they are sexually aroused" (Smith, Pine, & Hawley, 1988, p. 103), (d) "men cannot be forced to have sex against their will" (Stermac et al., 2004, p. 901), (e) "men are less affected by sexual assault than women" (Stermac et al., 2004, p. 901), (f) "men are in a constant state of readiness to accept any sexual opportunity" (Clements-Schreiber & Rempel, 1995, p. 199), and (g) "a man is expected to be able to defend himself against sexual assault" (Groth & Burgess, 1980, p. 808). For example, in Smith et al.'s (1988) study, participants perceived a male victim of a female-perpetrated assault as more likely to have encouraged the assault, enjoyed the encounter, and thus experienced little trauma. Male participants endorsed these perceptions more than women did, but this gender difference disappeared when the perpetrator was another man.

Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (1992) first attempted to measure these myths by focusing on three general beliefs: (a) Male rape

does not happen (e.g., “it is impossible to rape a man”), (b) rape is the victim’s fault (e.g., “men are to blame for not escaping”), and (c) men would not be traumatized by rape (e.g., “men do not need counseling after being raped”). Each of these beliefs was presented twice to manipulate the gender of the perpetrator. Consistent with research on female rape myths, they found that men were more accepting of male rape myths than were women. Furthermore, with the exception of the myth that denies the existence of male rape, male and female participants endorsed male rape myths to a greater extent when the perpetrator was a woman instead of a man. Despite these interesting initial results, little additional research has been conducted to further understand male rape myths. Thus, it is not clear how these rape myths develop, who believes these myths, and the function these myths have in determining attitudes toward male victims of rape.

We speculate that the same attitudes that function to support rape myths about female victims may also function to support rape myths about male victims. Specifically, adversarial sexual beliefs and acceptance of interpersonal violence correlates with participants’ support of female rape myths (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). It may be that individuals who accept interpersonal aggression will accept aggressive behavior in general, regardless of the victim’s gender. Furthermore, many of the items on the Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale depict men as the sexual aggressor. Participants who believe that men should assert themselves through violence may also be less sympathetic to male victims.

Furthermore, just as ambivalent sexism toward women is related to rape myth acceptance concerning female victims (e.g., Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2007; Glick & Fiske, 1997; Viki et al., 2004), we hypothesize that Glick and Fiske’s (1999) corresponding ambivalent sexism toward men (including the components of hostile and benevolent sexism toward men) will be related to support of male rape myths. Glick and Fiske state that just as sexist attitudes about women can be positive and negative, there are also ambivalent sexist attitudes toward men. Specifically, women resent men for their greater social power and aggressiveness while also admiring and needing them for these same qualities. For example, women may characterize men as being arrogant, sex starved, and domineering (hostile sexism) but also strong, resourceful, and stoic (benevolent sexism). Male participants also can hold these dual stereotypes toward men, but they typically score higher on benevolent sexism and lower on hostile sexism than do women. We expect that participants who are higher in benevolent sexism toward men will be more supportive of male rape myths, such that they will judge male rape victims harshly for not being “man enough” to escape a sexual

assault and, if assaulted, expect male victims to quickly reclaim their manhood and deny that the assault was traumatic. We also expect that hostile sexism toward men will be associated with rape myth acceptance because the belief that men often use unscrupulous means to obtain sex and power may be incompatible with the idea that a man could be sexually victimized.

Study Summary

The overall purpose of this study is to further investigate male rape myths using Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson's (1992) measure. Currently, this is the only measure of male rape myth acceptance that distinguishes between male and female assailants; however, it has not yet been examined for its psychometric properties. Therefore, the first goal is to use confirmatory factor analysis to examine the underlying structure the male rape myth measures. In their study, Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson calculated one total score for male rape myth acceptance suggesting a general, one-factor model. Yet they created their measure using three of most prevalent male rape myths in research literature (i.e., denial, blame, and trauma) suggesting a three-factor model. They also expected that the acceptance of each myth would differ depending on the gender of the perpetrator, suggesting a two-factor structure. In sum, we test three possible models of male rape myths: a three-factor solution by myth, a two-factor solution by gender of the perpetrator, or a one-factor solution of general male rape myths.

The second goal of this study is to explore the variables that might be associated with increased support of male rape myths. Specifically, we examine how acceptance of interpersonal violence, adversarial sex beliefs, and ambivalent sexism toward men relate to male rape myth acceptance, as these variables are similar to factors that support female rape myths. We also examine gender differences in the acceptance of male rape myths and compare the level of support for male rape myths versus female rape myths. We expect to replicate previous findings (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1992) that men are more supportive of male rape myths than are women.

Method

Participants

The participants were 423 college students from a medium-sized Midwestern, private, Catholic university (57.7%; $n = 246$) and a small Eastern

public college ($n = 180$). The demographics of the combined sample were 65% female ($n = 276$), 85.2% White/Caucasian ($n = 363$), with a mean age of 19.6 ($SD = 2.74$).

Procedure

The participants completed measures of male rape myth acceptance, female rape myth acceptance, ambivalent sexism toward men, adversarial sexual beliefs, and acceptance of interpersonal violence, as part of a larger study on sexual aggression (see Oswald & Russell, 2006). All participants received extra credit in an introductory psychology course.

Measures

Male rape myths. Using Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson's (1992) measure, participants indicated how much they agreed with 12 items that reflect misconceptions about men as victims of rape. Six items refer to men victimized by another man (e.g., "it is impossible for a man to rape a man"), and six items refer to women as perpetrators (e.g., "it is impossible for a man to be raped by a woman"). This measure uses a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*), with higher scores indicating more endorsement of these rape myths.

Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, Short Form. Participants completed Payne et al.'s (1999) scale, which uses a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) to assess agreement with myths about women as victims of rape (e.g., "many women secretly desire to be raped"). Higher scores signify more agreement with rape myths. The coefficient alpha was .85.

Adversarial sexual beliefs. Burt's (1980) measure contains nine items that assess participants' belief that men and women's romantic relationships with each other are, by nature, adversarial and exploitative. This measure uses a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*), with higher scores denoting greater endorsement of this viewpoint. The coefficient alpha was .83, and the overall mean was used in the analyses.

Acceptance of interpersonal violence. Participants completed five items from Burt's (1980) measure (e.g., "sometimes women need to be forced to have sex"). Participants responded using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly*

disagree, 7 = *strongly agree*). The coefficient alpha was .51, and the overall mean was used in the analyses. Although the reliability is lower than desired, it is similar to what was reported by Burt. Despite the low reliability, this scale was used because previous research has found it to be one of the best predictors of rape myth acceptance (Burt, 1980).

Ambivalence Toward Men Inventory. Employing Glick and Fiske's (1999) measure, participants expressed how much they agreed with items advocating hostile and benevolent stereotypes and prejudices about men (e.g., men are unwilling to share power with women; men should provide for women) using a 6-point Likert-type scale (0 = *disagree strongly*, 5 = *agree strongly*). Two means were extracted for analysis to assess benevolent sexism and hostile sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1999). The coefficient alphas for benevolent and hostile sexism were .85 and .81, respectively.

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To examine the factor structure of the male rape myth measure, we computed three alternative confirmatory factor models using EQS 5.7 (Bentler, 1998). The first model had each myth (denial, blame, and trauma) as a latent factor with four items as indicator variables. The three latent factors were allowed to covary. The second model was a two-factor model where each factor represented the myths by the gender of the perpetrator. There were six items as indicator variables to each latent factor, and the factors were allowed to covary. The third model was a general factor model in which all 12 items represented the single latent variable of male rape myth.

For identification purposes, the variance for each latent variable was set to 1. Maximum likelihood with Satorra-Bentler estimation was used to estimate the parameters and model chi-square. In interpreting the models, we examined the path estimates, standardized root mean residuals (SRMR), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), χ^2 , and several fit indices. Because the χ^2 is influenced by the sample size, we also looked at the χ^2 to degrees of freedom ratio, where a ratio of 2 or less indicates a good fit (Ullman, 1996). We considered the following general "rules of thumb" that an RMSEA less than .05 indicates a "good fit" and less than .08 indicates an "acceptable fit" (Hu & Bentler, 1999; McDonald & Ho, 2002 suggest .06 for a "good fit"), the SRMR should be close to .08 or less (Hu &

Bentler, 1999), and goodness of fit statistics should generally be larger than .90 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; McDonald & Ho, 2002).

The three-factor model with each latent variable representing a type of myth resulted in a Satorra-Bentler Scaled $\chi^2(51) = 154.53$, $p < .01$ (χ^2/df ratio = 3.03, Goodness of Fit Index [GFI] = .89, Comparative Fit Index [CFI] = .83, SRMR = .07, and RMSEA = .10). All the items had statistically significant parameters on the designated factor, indicating that the items were loaded onto the correct factors. The chi-square was significant, and the fit indices were weaker than desired according to traditional “rules of thumb.” However, the SRMR and relatively small residuals suggest an adequate first approximation of the data. Factor analyses for the two-factor model by gender, $\chi^2(53) = 200.42$, $p < .01$ (χ^2/df ratio = 3.78, GFI = .87, CFI = .80, SRMR = .08, and RMSEA = .11) and general model, $\chi^2(54) = 233.09$, $p < .01$ (χ^2/df ratio = 4.32, GFI = .85, CFI = .74, SRMR = .09, and RMSEA = .12) each demonstrated worse fit indices and model statistics.

Of the models tested, the three-factor model was the best fit and indicates that the myths should be examined as separate factors. The three subscales were labeled Denial (alpha = .60), Blame (alpha = .82), and Trauma (alpha = .50). The intercorrelations between the three subscales were significant. Denial positively correlated with Blame ($r = .44$, $p < .01$) and Trauma ($r = .50$, $p < .01$). Blame positively correlated with Trauma ($r = .44$, $p < .01$). Although the three-factor model was the best fit of the tested models, the less than ideal fit statistics, significant chi-square, and low coefficient alphas for two of the subscales suggest that this confirmatory factor model does not meet most of the traditional standards of a good scale structure. Additional scale development is needed. Thus, although we use the subscales in subsequent analyses to examine gender differences and the ideologies associated with male rape myth acceptance, these results should be considered exploratory until additional scale validation and replication of the results occur.

Comparisons of Rape Myth Acceptance by Participant Gender

The mean for each subscale was computed and used in a 2 (Gender) \times 3 (Myth) mixed model ANOVA, with myth as the within-subjects variable. The goal was to determine gender differences in male rape myth acceptance and across myth type. There was a main effect of myth type, $F(2, 416) = 32.07$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .13$, such that participants were most supportive of the Blame myth ($M = 2.01$, $SD = 1.09$) followed by the Trauma myth ($M = 1.86$, $SD = .83$), and the Denial myth ($M = 1.71$, $SD = .79$). Post hoc analysis

revealed that all mean differences were significant ($ps < .01$). Collapsing across myth type, men ($M = 2.14$) demonstrated more overall male rape myth acceptance than did women ($M = 1.71$), $F(1, 417) = 35.51$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .08$. These main effects were qualified by the Myth Type \times Gender interaction, $F(2, 416) = 18.15$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .08$, such that men were more supportive of male rape myths than were women, but the magnitude of these differences depended on the type of myth. For men, there were significant differences between all three rape myths ($ps < .01$). Men had the highest mean on the Blame subscale ($M = 2.49$, $SD = 1.23$), followed by the Trauma subscale ($M = 2.13$, $SD = .85$), and the lowest mean for the Denial subscale ($M = 1.80$, $SD = .84$). For women, the differences between the three rape myths (Blame: $M = 1.76$, $SD = .92$; Trauma: $M = 1.71$, $SD = .77$; Denial: $M = 1.66$, $SD = .76$) were nonsignificant ($ps > .10$).

Comparisons of Male Rape Acceptance With Female Rape Acceptance

A total score on the male rape myth measure significantly correlated with the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale ($r = .58$, $p < .01$). Not surprisingly, men ($M = 2.01$, $SD = .61$), compared to women ($M = 1.72$, $SD = .50$), were more supportive of female rape myths, $t(247.3) = 4.89$, $p < .01$. To determine if there were differences in the acceptance of male versus female rape myths within genders, the raw scores on the male and female rape myth scales were transformed into z scores for analysis (because they were measured using different Likert-type scales). For men, there was no difference in the level of support for male ($M = .38$, $SD = 1.06$) and female rape myths ($M = .34$, $SD = 1.10$), $t(144) = .51$, $p > .10$. Similarly, for women, there was also no significant difference between the acceptance of male ($M = -.21$, $SD = .90$) and female rape myths ($M = -.19$, $SD = .89$), $t(273) = -.44$, $p > .10$. Thus, support for rape myths did not vary by gender of the victim. and, overall, men were more supportive of all rape myths than were women.

Regression Models for Male Rape Myth Acceptance

Separate regression models were conducted for men and women to see if the underlying ideologies supporting male rape myths differed by participant gender. All predictors were entered into regression equation simultaneously.

For the Denial myth, acceptance of interpersonal violence was the only significant predictor ($\beta = .31$, $t = 3.17$, $p < .01$) for men, $F(4, 140) = 6.76$,

$p < .01$, $R^2 = .14$. For women, $F(4, 268) = 16.01$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .18$, benevolent sexism toward men ($\beta = .30$, $t = 4.37$, $p < .01$) and acceptance of interpersonal violence ($\beta = .13$, $t = 2.08$, $p < .05$) were significant predictors, and hostile sexism was marginally significant ($\beta = .13$, $t = 1.78$, $p = .08$).

For the Blame myth, benevolent sexism toward men was the only predictor ($\beta = .35$, $t = 3.71$, $p < .01$), $F(4, 140) = 15.09$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .28$, and acceptance of interpersonal violence was marginally significant ($\beta = .16$, $t = 1.77$, $p = .08$) for men. For women, $F(4, 268) = 19.75$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .22$, benevolent sexism ($\beta = .29$, $t = 4.36$, $p < .01$) and acceptance of interpersonal violence ($\beta = .15$, $t = 2.55$, $p < .05$) were significant predictors.

For the Trauma myth, acceptance of interpersonal violence was a significant predictor for men, $F(4, 140) = 5.14$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .10$ ($\beta = .27$, $t = 2.65$, $p < .01$). For women, $F(4, 268) = 14.48$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .16$, benevolent sexism ($\beta = .24$, $t = 3.51$, $p < .01$) and acceptance of interpersonal violence ($\beta = .22$, $t = 3.63$, $p < .01$) were significant predictors.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to develop a better understanding of rape myths about male victims. To date, the only measure of male rape myth acceptance that distinguishes between male and female perpetrators (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1992) has received little psychometric investigation. We found that subscales by myth type (Denial, Blame, and Trauma), rather than by the perpetrator's gender or a general model of male rape myth acceptance, was the best fit for the data. This suggests that it is beneficial to examine male rape myths separately rather than to use an overall rape myth score. Indeed, all three myths are unique and it would be important for theoretical reasons to examine them separately.

However, although breaking down the scale by myth type resulted in the best fit of the three tested models, the scale fit statistics and model chi-square did not meet the traditional standards of a good fit. Furthermore, the Denial and Trauma subscales had reliability coefficients that were lower than desired. Thus, the results suggest that the current Male Rape Myth Scale needs to be improved, and we recommend two specific changes. First, we suggest that a six-factor model that examines the three myths separated by gender of the perpetrator should be tested in future research. Research has shown that people are more likely to agree with the myths when the perpetrator is a woman than a man (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1992), and this is a potentially important theoretical distinction. Furthermore,

collapsing across gender of perpetrator may have resulted in the weak fit statistics and low reliability coefficients for the subscales. Second, we suggest developing and including additional items. There were not enough scale items to allow a test of a six-factor model in the current study, and additional items would allow for this test. The additional items relevant to each of the myths should also help to increase the scale reliability. In sum, we conclude that although the Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson Male Rape Myth Scale was an important step for research on male rape myths, efforts for additional scale development and improvements are warranted. We hope that this study raises the awareness of other researchers who use this scale as well as prompts future validation efforts.

The second goal of this study was to investigate the factors associated with support of male rape myths. Given the concern about the rape myth subscales, these findings should be interpreted with caution. Nonetheless, these preliminary results provide tentative insights into the ideologies associated with acceptance of male rape myths. Similar to previous research, we found that men were more supportive of the rape myths than were women. Men were most accepting of the myth that male rape victims are responsible for being raped. Men were less accepting of the myth that men would not be upset after a sexual assault and the least accepting of the idea that men simply do not get raped. Overall, acceptance of male and female rape myths was highly correlated. Consistent with previous research, men were more accepting of rape myths against both male and female victims. Past literature on female rape myths has argued that men are more accepting of female rape myths because of adversarial, antiwoman attitudes (e.g., Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). If hostility toward women is the only contributing ideology, we would expect that men would endorse female rape myths to a greater extent than they endorse male rape myths. However, men's acceptance of rape myths did not significantly differ based on the gender of the victim. Women's acceptance of rape myths also did not vary based on the gender of the victim. This supports Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson's (1992) conclusion that men are more accepting of rape myths in general, not just against female victims.

In exploring the ideologies associated with each of the rape myths, we find that benevolent sexism toward men is associated with male rape myths. This is consistent with the research that benevolent sexism toward women is associated with blaming female victims of acquaintance rape (Abrams et al., 2003; Chapleau et al., 2007; Viki et al., 2004). Viki et al. (2004) concluded that benevolent sexism is associated with victim blaming to protect one's belief in a just world. Similarly, individuals high in benevolent sexism toward men may

believe that men are supposed to be invincible and, if a man is raped, he must have showed some unmanly weakness to provoke or permit the assault. For female participants, agreement with benevolent sexism toward men was associated with support for all three myths; however, for men, benevolent sexism was associated with only the blame myth. Perhaps future research can shed light on this gender difference.

Surprisingly, hostile sexism toward men was not significantly associated with support for any of the male rape myths. Hostile sexism toward men is the belief that men exploit women for sex and power. It might be that hostile sexist beliefs are relevant only in the cases of heterosexual interactions and may not apply when the aggressor is male. Alternatively, Abrams et al. (2003) found that hostile sexism against women was associated with men's rape proclivity, not rape myth acceptance. Similarly, hostile sexism toward men may also predict rape proclivity against male victims. For example, Clements-Schreiber and Rempel (1995) found that women who endorsed stereotypes that men are sexually weak were more likely to coerce men into having sex. This is an interesting issue for future research.

Consistent with research on female rape myths, acceptance of interpersonal violence was a strong predictor for support of male rape myths for both male and female participants. Men and women who normalize sexual violence may not think of such acts as "real rape" (e.g., Du Mont et al., 2003). However, this finding is tentative given the low reliability coefficient for the Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale. Contrary to expectations, adversarial sexual beliefs were not a predictor of male rape myths. In hindsight, this is not surprising as this scale assesses the belief that men and women are competing for dominance in a relationship (Burt, 1980), whereas the Male Rape Myth Scale includes aggressors of both genders. Future research should explore this association when the rape myth scales are broken down by perpetrator gender.

In sum, we find preliminary support that the ideologies associated with rape myths about female victims are also associated with rape myths about male victims. Because this is the first study to examine the ideologies underlying male rape myths, there may be other important attitudinal variables that were not part of this study. Continued examination of other attitudinal variables is warranted.

Although this study provides a first step toward understanding male rape myths, there are limitations to consider. The first limitation is that our findings show the Male Rape Myth Scale is in need of additional development. Thus, the subsequent analyses must be interpreted with caution until replicated. Similarly, the Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence

Scale, despite being commonly used in research, displays poor internal reliability, and future research would be wise to revise this measure. The second limitation is that the attitudes of college students may not generalize to other populations. However, rape and sexual coercion is a serious problem on college campuses, and these findings are important to consider within that context. We also had a relatively small number of men compared to women, so research with additional samples is needed. A third limitation is that the mean level of support for the rape myths was below the midpoint, suggesting that people do not believe in rape myths. Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (1992) had a similar finding and posited that by providing a definition of male rape in the instructions, they had “educated” their participants and dissipated the associated myths. Nonetheless, we found sizable proportions of men and women who agreed with the myths. Most notably, 26% of men and 16% of women agreed that a man would not be very upset after being raped by a woman, and 25% of men and nearly 10% of women agreed that a man is blameworthy for not escaping a woman. Thus, low mean values on this scale do not necessarily suggest that rape myth acceptance is not a significant problem.

This research takes a first step at systematically understanding myths about male rape and the ideologies that support these beliefs. Our results suggest that the ideologies that support male rape myths are similar to those that support female rape myths. Brownmiller (1975) discussed “rape culture” to describe how rape and the threat of rape are used to intimidate women. Although we do not disagree with her view that rape is used as a tool to keep women “in their place,” we believe that this is only half of the story. We propose that rape is a weapon used to keep both women and men from straying too far from their prescribed gender roles. Although the call to study male rape sounded not long after researchers began examining female rape, this area of research is still understudied. By mapping the largely uncharted territory of male rape myths, we can refine our current understanding of sexual aggression to better serve everyone.

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