

Running head: DANGEROUS BELIEFS

The Identification of Dangerous Sexual Beliefs

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Abstract

Previous research suggests themes of Victim Blame, Machismo, and Equation of Rape with Sex are positively correlated with males' sexual assault intentions. The current study utilizes an online survey to determine if any of these themes are more likely to be related to males' intentions to commit sexual assault. 230 participants (79 males, 151 females) completed an online survey regarding rape myths, intent to commit sexual assault, and previous sexual assault experiences. Men who reported some intent were significantly more likely to hold beliefs of Victim Blame, Machismo, and Equation of Rape with Sex than men who report no intention ($p < .05$). These results suggest that all of the examined themes are essential to address in male-directed sexual assault prevention programs.

The Identification of Dangerous Sexual Beliefs

Sexual assault is often viewed as a women's issue rather than an issue for men or society as a whole. According to this view, rape is a psychological and physical complication the female must deal with on her own. Yet the belief that rape is an issue for only one gender is unrealistic when viewed in the light of the fact that 99% of sexual assault perpetrators are males and 90% of victims are females (Greenfield, 1997). These statistics clearly show that rape is an issue in which both genders are involved. Prevention of sexual assault has previously focused on educating females to avoid dangerous situations, wear conservative clothing, and always use the buddy system (Warshaw, 1994). Yet placing the responsibility of sexual assault prevention on the victims does nothing to reduce attempted sexual assault and dangerous erroneous beliefs that may contribute to the crime. Several studies have shown that many perpetrators of sexual assault subscribe to false beliefs regarding the psychological and social trauma inflicted on victims of sexual assault (Foubert, Garner, & Thaxter, 2006; Hamilton & Yee, 1990; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Schewe & O'Donohue, 1993). Burt (1980) and numerous subsequent studies have identified specific rape myths, defined as "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists" (p. 217), that demonstrate positive correlations with likelihood of committing sexual assault. Thus, this crime may be more effectively prevented through the education of potential perpetrators rather than potential victims because it may often occur due to the perpetrator's dangerous beliefs in spite of the victim's vigilance.

Costs of Sexual Assault

The individual and social consequences of sexual assault are severe. A study conducted by a psychiatric nurse, Ann Burgess, and sociologist, Lynda Holmstrom (1972, as cited in Herman, 1997) observed severe and aversive reactions in rape victims, later termed "rape trauma

syndrome.” Rape trauma syndrome often consists of reactions such as insomnia, sleeping disturbances, and even dissociative disorders. Following the traumatic experience of rape, a victim may begin to doubt her senses of trust and control. Feelings of insecurity and doubt infiltrate the victim’s personal relationships and affect a victim’s relationship with her spouse, children, and friends. These feelings of helplessness and confusion may be intensified in sexual assault cases in which the victim had a previous relationship with the perpetrator (Herman, 1997). A comprehensive study (Michael, Gagnon, Laumann, & Kolata, 1994) on the sexual life of 3,432 Americans found that 96% of women who reported experiencing sexual assault said they knew their attacker. In addition to its effect on victims, sexual assault creates an atmosphere of fear for women in contexts such as dating and parties where they are warned rape may occur. In summary the social and psychological consequences of sexual assault have a devastating impact on both victims and non-victims in American society.

Rape Culture

Boswell and Spade (1996) define rape culture as “a set of values and beliefs that provide an environment conducive to rape.” Certain aspects within our society promote a rape culture in which women are viewed not as individual humans, but rather faceless objects used for an established goal (e.g. sexual pleasure) rather than an emotional attachment or personal relationship. This culture is perpetuated through television shows that have men discussing the physical features of the women they “scored” with the night before. Commercials contribute by using feminine features as objects such as alcohol bottles and other consumable goods. The prevalence of these dehumanizing portrayals of females in our culture suggest that many individuals may view woman as objects to be used, enjoyed, and replaced. Even if men within such a culture do not personally intend to commit rape, they may hold attitudes that contribute to

a climate in which rape is not stigmatized. Previous studies have found that male fraternity members report higher intentions to commit sexual assault than non-fraternity men report, possibly due to an effect of living in a rape culture in which sex is a goal and women are simply the means (Garrett-Gooding & Senter, 1987; Martin & Hummer, 1989). A study conducted by Capadli, Dishion, Stoolmiller, and Yoerger (2001) suggests that male aggression towards women can be partially explained by mere exposure to and engagement in hostile and derogatory talk about women. Reinforcement of these discussions, through social acceptance within one's peer group, may lead to increased levels of machismo, in which men view themselves as physically, intellectually, and socially dominant to women. As this pattern continues to escalate, dangerous behaviors in regards to forced sexual assault may quickly become excused -- and even encouraged -- within certain social groups.

When a woman becomes a victim of sexual assault in a rape culture, individuals often look to support their "just world bias" by suggesting that the woman responsible for the rape due to the clothes she was wearing, her promiscuous past, or by building the man's sexual appetite without intending to follow through on her behaviors (Abbey, McAuslan, & Ross, 1998; Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003; Jones & Aronson, 1973; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Smith, Keating, Hester, & Mitchell, 1976). This tendency to blame the victim not dismisses the serious psychological and physical damage done to victim, but may also contribute to severe levels of guilt in the victim. Rather than seek help in recovering from her traumatic experience, a victim may internalize the anger and pain that she feels and thus experience a dangerous spiral of self-disgust. Subsequent victims of sexual assault will see the condemnation that outspoken survivors may experience, and in turn decide to remain quiet and not report the rape or seek treatment. These dangerous behaviors contribute to a cycle in which victims remain quiet and

sexual assault offenders may continue to violate women without fear of repercussion. Burt's Rape Myth Acceptance scale (1980) measures some of these beliefs through questions such as, "In the majority of rapes, the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation" and "Many women have an unconscious wish to be raped; and may then unconsciously set up a situation in which they are likely to be raped" (223). Research by Burt and Albin (1981) suggests high levels of rape myth acceptance correlate with limited definitions of rape, and thus support rape behaviors. If an individual believes that rape is only defined as an unknown male demonstrating physical violence in order to achieve vaginal penetration, he may be much more likely to engage in relatively less coercive behaviors to force an acquaintance to engage in sexual contact because he does not view his behavior as rape. In addition, a man may believe that rape is simply sex with an increase in physical force. Such a view demeans the act of rape to a purely physical experience that is neither psychologically or emotionally damaging. It is through the acceptance of such restricted definitions of rape that men may perpetrate rape without understanding and acknowledging the severity of their behaviors.

Prevalence of Sexual Assault

The need for sexual assault prevention programs is apparent when one notes that in the year 2002, over 95,000 cases of sexual assault were reported (Kilpatrick & Ruggiero, 2004). Even with such a high number, it is important to note that for every rape reported, three to ten rapes go unreported (Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987). College-aged women are at a particularly higher risk than older women for experiencing sexual assault, with the number one targeted population being women ages 16 to 19 years old, and the second highest being 20 to 24 years old (Bureau of Justice, 1984). In a study conducted by Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski (1987) one in four college women reported experiencing sexual assault since the age of fourteen.

While critics have questioned defining the specific behaviors described in the study's scale¹ as rape, the use of any force, either verbal or physical, to obtain sexual gratification at the expense of another human being is a destructive behavior no matter what label it receives. The same study suggests that neither the size of the higher education institution, nor the size of the surrounding area, play a role in the prevalence of rape among college students. These findings emphasize the need for sexual assault prevention programs on campuses of all sizes.

The concept of men as sexual assault perpetrators is not merely a gender stereotype. Research conducted by Muehlenhard and Linton (1987) has shown 78% of college women surveyed reported experiencing sexual assault during their college years. In comparison, only 57% of college men reported committing sexual assault. The argument could be made that the difference between the number of women who report experiencing sexual assault and the relatively lower number of men who report engaging in coercive behaviors is a result of repeat male offenders. However, Allison and Wrightsman (1994) propose that due to the use of random sampling of participants, the considerably drastic difference between the two numbers, and support from related studies with different participants (Michael et al., 1994) this gender difference in reported incidence may occur due to gender differences in the definition of rape and coercive behaviors.

Gender Differences in Perceptions of Rape

Whereas men may define rape as intercourse forced upon a woman with the use of physical power, women may view rape as intercourse obtained via verbal or physical coercion (Allison & Wrightsman, 1994). The discrepancies between males' and females' definitions of rape may not be such an issue if men and women were likely to openly discuss their sexual

¹ The specific question is worded "Have you given into sexual intercourse when you didn't want to because you were overwhelmed by a man's continual arguments and pressure?"

desires and intentions. Yet the complications in preventing sexual assault is complicated by both definition differences and the fact that individual sexual desires are often not verbally discussed. Rather than verbally addressing individual desires and limits, couples may often rely upon non-verbal cues that can be ambiguous. The lack of direct communication may lead to misinterpreted cues that could lead to an unwanted sexual encounter. For example, a male could assume from his female partner's passionate kisses that she desires further sexual contact; however, the female may actually desire nothing more than kissing. One's lack of awareness on the reliance of indirect communication may play a role in the prevalence of sexual assault. The dramatic consequences that may occur from such situations may be avoided through the practice of both males and females learning to stop when they are unsure of their partner's wishes and asking for clarification

Sexual Assault Prevention

While all efforts to reduce sexual assault are welcome, it is critical to identify the most effective techniques in preventing sexual assault. Previous prevention programs have been mixed-gender, with the men often interpreting the presentation in one way while women take home an entirely different message (Schewe & O'Donohue, 1993). These programs focused on the behaviors women could employ to reduce their chances of becoming victims (Foubert, 2000). Focusing on women's responsibilities in avoiding potentially dangerous situations reinforces the belief that women are responsible for sexual assault. Despite the goal of awareness and responsible decision making, women often left the programs with feelings of hyper vigilance and responsibility for not attracting possible perpetrators (Allison & Wrightsman, 1994). Men may leave the same program believing women are responsible for not dressing too provocatively, sending mixed messages, or going out alone. Audience members may leave such programs

believing that men's main responsibility is to ensure that women are not entirely intoxicated before pressuring them for sex. The message that men are rapists and women are victims may also cause men to feel attacked and defensive without offering any solutions to the problem (Foubert, 2000).

To increase the effectiveness of sexual assault prevention programs while reducing negative side effects (e.g. increased fear and anxiety in women and increased levels of guilt and defensiveness in men), recent prevention programs have shifted their focus from mixed-gender formats to gender-specific formats (Foubert, 2000; Schewe & O'Donohue, 1993). Women's programs focus on clarifying the definition of rape, encouraging women to express their consent or non-consent in situations where sexual pressure is possible, and tips on how to stay safe (i.e. self-defense tactics, buddy system for parties, not going outside alone at night) (Holcomb, Savage, Seehafer, & Waalkes, 2002). Curriculum for male-directed programs attempts to clarify the definition of rape, broaden the label of sexual assault from stranger-rape to date rape and sexual coercion, as well as discredit pervasive gender stereotypes that have high positive correlations with rape myth acceptance (Foubert, 2000; Schewe & O'Donohue, 1993). Literature reviews suggest that highly effective programs for men also include education on the severity of rape and the aversive effects on the victim in addition to factual information such as the definition of rape (Hamilton & Yee, 1990; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Schewe & O'Donohue, 1993). A program developed by Foubert (2000), known as The Men's Program, incorporates the use of peer facilitators and an empathy-based model with the aforementioned curriculum for male prevention programs. The Men's Program has reported success in reducing participants' rape myth acceptance and behavioral intent to rape (Foubert, 2000).

The Present Study

The present study seeks to identify dangerous sexual beliefs. Dangerous sexual beliefs are defined as beliefs that may increase one's likelihood of being either a perpetrator or victim of sexual assault. Unfortunately the use of correlational research does not enable conclusions to be drawn in regards to cause and effect of belief and behavior. While the two have been shown to have a relationship, it is unclear as to the direction of influence. It is unknown if the acceptance of certain beliefs makes an individual more likely to engage in sexual assault or if an individual's previous sexual assault behaviors contribute to the acceptance of dangerous beliefs.

Despite the complications in determining the directional relationship, it is still important to determine the strength of the relationship between dangerous beliefs and sexual assault behaviors. Analysis of popular measures of rape myth acceptance (RMA, Burt, 1980) has identified three themes that are positively correlated with intent to rape: denial of rape's prevalence, excusing rape through blaming the experience on the victim or situational factors (e.g. the perpetrator was drunk), or denial of the seriousness of rape by defining rape as merely sex without emotional or psychological consequences (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Individuals with high levels of rape myth acceptance are also more likely to report having committed sexual assault in the past (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Burt, 1980). While most research on treats it as a single construct, we hope to treat the various themes found within the RMA scale separately to determine if one of the three themes of sexual beliefs is more dangerous than the others. This survey was constructed with questions from Burt's (1980) Rape Myth Acceptance scale, Burt's (1980) Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence, Sex Role Stereotyping, and Sexual Conservatism scale, and Villemez and Touhey's (1983) Macho Scale. If specific sexual beliefs are found to be more likely to be held by men who report an intent to rape or commit sexual assault or by

women who report previous sexual assault experiences, it will be critical to discredit these beliefs in future sexual assault prevention programs. Through explicit education and awareness of the dangerous implications of these beliefs, future sexual assault prevention programs may become more effective in reducing levels of rape myth acceptance and behavioral intent to rape.

Method

Participants

The sexual beliefs survey was posted on a popular website of online psychology studies accessible to college and graduate students throughout the United States. In addition, three hundred students from a small private, liberal arts college located in the Midwest were randomly selected from the student directory. Each participant received an invitation via email requesting their assistance in completing the online survey and were given a link to the survey. Participants were also recruited personally via verbal invitation from the researchers. Two hundred thirty participants fully and accurately completed the survey², 79 males and 151 females. The average age for participants was 21.6 years for females and 23.4 years for males. The majority of participants were Caucasian at 83.3%, 4.8% were African-American, 4.8% were Hispanic, and 7% of participants reported Other. Upon completion, participants received a debriefing form

Instruments (see Appendix A)

The online Sexual Beliefs survey was composed of questions obtained from previously established scales. These scales included Burt's (1980) Traditional Gender Roles, Sexual Conservatism, and Sex Role Stereotyping and Villemez and Touhey's (1983) Macho Scale. Previous research (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Schewe & O'Donohue, 1993) has found these scales to be correlated with male's Intent to Rape. In addition, a Sexual Assault Experiences

² The surveys of 18 participants were disregarded due to incomplete surveys (missing at least 20%) and 12 participants were disregarded due to underage status.

Survey, modeled on Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski's (1987) Sexual Experiences Survey, was used to measure the participants' personal experiences with sexual assault. Results from this portion of the survey were used to identify beliefs found more among victims of sexual assault than non-victims and possible variations between reported male and female experiences. The surveys were measured using a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The scores from all questions were reverse-scored where appropriate and averaged according to the theme of Machismo, Equation of Sex and Rape, and Victim Blame. These scales are described in greater detail below.

Malamuth's Behavioral Intent to Rape (1991). Malamuth's Behavioral Intent to Rape, in addition to a variation of the question, were used to assess male participants' self-reported likelihood of committing rape. Malamuth's original measure is a single item that asks "If you could be assured of not being caught or punished, how likely would you be to rape?" A variation designed for this study read, "If you could be assured of not being caught or punished, how likely would you be to force a woman to engage in sexual contact?" The second variation of Malamuth's question was designed to capture possible underreporting due to expected resistance to labeling one's behavior as rape (Gagnon, Laurmann, & Koalta, 1994; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987; Warshaw, 1994). Both measures were rated on a scale of 1 (not likely at all) to 5 (very likely). We expect to find a high positive correlation between rape myth acceptance and behavioral intent to rape, indicating a relationship between an individual's beliefs and their proclivity to rape.

Victim Blame. Items from the Burt (1980) Rape Myth Acceptance Scale were used to measure the level of rape-supportive beliefs regarding victim blame. These beliefs often attribute victims' accusations of sexual assault to motives such as retribution or need for attention and

thus place blame onto the victim. A review of previous sexual assault research suggests that, in addition to victim blame, the RMA scale has two additional components: denial of rape's existence, denial of the seriousness of rape (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

Machismo. The current researchers established a measure of Machismo through the combination of selected questions from Villemez and Touhey's (1977) Macho scale and Burt's (1980) Sex Role Stereotyping scale. Both aforementioned scales have previously established and designed to measure beliefs of male dominance and power in relationships. Examples items from this scale include "No matter what people say, women really like men to dominate them," and "It is better for a woman to use her feminine charm to get what she wants than to ask for it outright." High scores on Machismo indicate high acceptance of violence, control, and dominance in male-female relationships.

Equating Rape with Sex. Measurements for an individual's level of equating rape with sex were designed based on Villemez and Touhey's (1977) Macho Scale. High scores in Equating Rape with Sex indicate an individual's lack of distinction between the violence and psychological components of sexual assault from the pleasure of consensual sex. Examples from this scale include, "Victims imagine the rapes to be worse than they actually were" and "Rape is merely a way to get sex." We hypothesize high scores on these scales will be significantly higher for men who report a likelihood to commit sexual assault than those who report no likelihood.

Procedure

Upon visiting the website, participants received an online informed consent (see Appendix B) including information regarding local counseling services before beginning the survey. Participants were instructed to click upon a link that would direct them to a survey

designed for their genders. Upon completion of the survey, participants again received a debriefing along with information regarding local counseling services.

Results

Sexual Assault Experiences

As shown in Table 1, results from the Sexual Assault Experiences survey reveal more women report being the victim of sexual assault experiences than males report perpetrating. These results are supported by previous research by Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski (1987), with our results in regards to physically-forced rape scenarios all being within 1.1% of those reported in this study. In contrast, participants in the current study reported an 8-10% increase in sexual assault through the use of drugs and alcohol (men 12.7%; women 18.3%) than reported by Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski (1987) (men 4%; women 8%). These results may be due to an increase in prevalence, differences in the same population, or varied sample sizes.

Once prevalence and experiences had been examined, we began to analyze beliefs of both victims and non-victims. Previous research has shown the themes of Victim Blame, Equating Sex and Rape, and Machismo to have positive correlations with sexual assault behaviors (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). With a relationship between these themes and sexual assault, the analysis of this study seeks to identify if any of these specific beliefs are more dangerous than others.

Female Victims and Non-Victims

Analyses of all three themes showed no difference between the beliefs of female victims and non-victims (See Table 2). In addition to these results, a second t-test revealed that men reported significantly higher levels of RMA ($M=2.54$) than females ($M=2.28$), $t(246)=3.32$, $p=.001$. These results, in combination with higher levels of reported incidence of sexual assault

among women, suggest that women's beliefs are not as likely to be related to the occurrence of sexual assault. Women are less likely to report rape supportive beliefs, whether they are survivors of sexual assault or report no previous experience. With this in mind, we turned the rest of our data analyses towards men's reported beliefs and experiences.

Men's Sexual Beliefs

As shown in Table 3, the three themes examined – Victim Blame, Equating Rape with Sex, and Machismo – all demonstrate high positive correlations with males' reported Intent. However, the data was non-linear, suggesting that correlations would not capture the pattern. Frequency of response at the higher end of the scale was non-conducive to such an analysis. These preliminary results suggest that the three themes do indeed have a relationship with Intent and this relationship should be analyzed further to determine significance between men who report some level of intent as compared to those who report no intent.

In attempting to identify a difference between men who report a likelihood of committing sexual assault versus those who report no likelihood, the data was divided between those who reported no likelihood (1) and those who report some likelihood (2-5) on the Likert Scale. In following the example of previous research, this split was used as a qualitative difference in which no intent is distinguished from *any intent*. The scores for both Intent questions were averaged for each participant. For a frequency chart in regards to Intent, see Table 4. Victim Blame scores were found by calculating an average score for each participant. High scores indicated a strong acceptance of rape myths and accusing the victim of instigating the assault while low scores indicated a decreased level of rape myth acceptance and lower likelihood of placing blame upon the victim. Further analysis of the sexual beliefs reveals a significant relationship between each theme and behavioral intent to rape. The average Victim Blame score

for males indicating some level of intent to commit sexual assault was significantly higher ($M=3.07$) than for males who report no likelihood of committing sexual assault ($M=2.33$), $t(72)=3.95, p < .01$ (Figure 1). Individuals scoring high on this scale are more likely to accuse the victim of instigating the assault and removing blame from the perpetrator. This relationship signifies that Victim Blame is a dangerous sexual belief.

Another dangerous set of sexual beliefs are those relating to the equation of rape and sex. Individuals scoring high on this scale are likely to not distinguish between consensual sex and the violence and domination of rape. The average score for Equating Rape with Sex for males indicating some level of intent to commit sexual assault was significantly higher ($M=3.37$) than the average for males who report no likelihood of committing sexual assault ($M=2.51$) $t(72)=3.41, p < .01$ (Figure 2). The relationship signifies that Equating Rape and Sex is another dangerous sexual belief.

The third examined theme is that of Machismo. Individuals scoring high on this scale are likely to emphasize dominance and control within relationships. The average Machismo score for males indicating some level of intent to commit sexual assault was significantly higher ($M=3.46$) than the average for males who report no likelihood of committing sexual assault ($M=2.68$), $t(72)=3.40, p < .01$ (Figure 3). The relationship signifies that Machismo is also a dangerous sexual belief.

Discussion

Women's Dangerous Beliefs

Findings from the Sexual Assault Experiences Survey reveal that women report being the victim of sexual assault than males report perpetrating. These results are reflective of past research obtained by Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski (1987). Because previous research points to

women as the primary victims of sexual assault (Greenfield, 1997), and there is an identified discrepancy between prevalence reports of men and women, we were able to identify a need for sexual assault programs on college campuses geared toward preventing sexual assault behaviors in men while training women how to prevent becoming a victim.

We further evaluated the beliefs of victims and non-victims and found no difference in levels of Victim Blame, Machismo, and Equating Rape with Sex between victims and non-victims. While we cannot determine if victims' beliefs were similar to non-victims before the assault or if they changed after the assault occurred, it is possible that women's beliefs do not play a role in their sexual assault experiences. Thus, a woman with low Victim Blame may be as likely to become a victim of sexual assault as a woman with low Victim Blame and attempting to change such beliefs may not have an impact on her actual future experiences with sexual assault. In addition, our research revealed that females have significantly lower levels of Victim Blame than males. These findings suggest that, without the immediate influence of prevention programs, men and women view sexual assault-related themes very differently. Due to women's lower levels of dangerous sexual beliefs and greater incidence of reported of sexual assault experiences, it is suggested that women's beliefs are not related to the occurrence of sexual assault. Thus, rather than continuing to examine women's beliefs, our analyses shifted to focus on men's reported beliefs and experiences.

Men's Dangerous Beliefs

The purpose of this study was to examine dangerous sexual beliefs that have been shown to maintain a relationship with behavioral intent to rape among college students, to determine if any of the previously identified themes are more dangerous than others. Previous research has shown Victim Blame, Machismo, and Equating Rape with Sex as all being related to males'

behavioral intent to rape (Burt, 1980; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Schewe & O'Donohue, 1993), and our study sought to determine if any one of these beliefs is more dangerous than the others in regards to a stronger relationship with males' behavioral intent. Our results show that Victim Blame, Machismo, and Equating Rape with Sex are all dangerous beliefs with no theme being less dangerous than the others. These beliefs are considered dangerous because they are more likely to be held by men who self-report some likelihood of committing sexual assault. Thus, all themes are important to examine and deal with in sexual assault prevention programs because it appears that all themes are significantly related to males' intentions. While we are unable to identify to use our results to identify the direction of influence in the relationship between beliefs and intent, our identification of the existing relationship determines that sexual assault is a complicated issue that cannot be adequately addressed if sought through the dispelling of only one theme of beliefs.

Future Research

While our results are significant, future research may find stronger results with a more specific and limited participant pool. In order to obtain highly generalizable findings to the college population, future research should restrict their study to include only undergraduate students or those within the appropriate undergraduate age range. Future research should also seek to obtain a more ethnically diverse sample. Our study consisted of predominantly Caucasian participants with a small number of American-American, Asian-American, and Hispanic participants. The inclusion of a more diverse population may generate greater statistical significance, but also be more significant when generalizing results to the larger population.

Sexual Assault Prevention Programs

Due to the detected differences in sexual beliefs between men and women, we have identified a need for gender-specific sexual assault prevention programs. We identified that more women report experiencing sexual assault than men report committing the act. It is important to note that this statistic is consistent with previous research and suggests that this is a trend rather than a limited occurrence (Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987). In an effort to reconcile these reported differences, future prevention programs should include the definition of rape as well as work to assist men and women in identifying situations that are, by definition, sexual assault.

For future research, it is important to look at all sexual assault prevention programs to ensure that the programs address the three themes that have been shown significant in sexual assault beliefs. Because our results indicated a difference in beliefs among genders, it is important to address males and females in applicable but different approaches. The three dangerous themes of Victim Blame, Equating Rape with Sex, and Machismo should all be addressed and dispelled in prevention programs directed towards male participants, while these themes do not appear to be essential to decreasing the prevalence of sexual assault among women. Rather, future research should attempt to identify dangerous beliefs for women and follow through with appropriate prevention programs addressing these beliefs. However, even with male and female programs focusing on different issues, women should also discuss the three themes and be confident in encouraging men to reduce any dangerous beliefs they may hold. This may be done through simple means such as women refusing to listen to jokes that belittle rape victims or equate rape with the traumatic experience of sexual assault. While women are not responsible for changing men's beliefs and behaviors, it is highly beneficial for women to expect treatment and behaviors that create equality between males and females, especially in the realm of emotional and sexual relationships.

Application of this study is currently being implemented at a small liberal arts college located in the Midwest. We are in the stages of implementing a men's sexual assault prevention program on campus. Based on a model developed by Foubert and Marriott (1996), The Men's Program, is an all-male, peer facilitated, empathy-based program that defines rape and works to reduce levels of RMA among college-aged men. Participants in the Men's Program begin by discussing the definition for rape and sexual assault. The peer educators provide basic and generalized definitions, and the group discusses situations that the definitions should include. A 15 minute video of a police officer describing a rape situation and is followed with discussion. Use of the video hopes to give participants a clearer perception of what rape is like from a victim's perspective. Participants are then given information on helping sexual assault survivors, including common errors and misperceptions that further harm the victim. Participants are also given tips for how they might help further prevent sexual assault as individual men. This program has been shown to reduce levels of RMA for no less than seven months following participation in the program (Foubert, 2000). Even with the perceived impact and success of the program, we hope to use our findings to explicitly address the identified dangerous sexual beliefs to strengthen the existing program.

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Appendix A

Sexual Beliefs Survey**Behavioral Intent ($\alpha=.88$)**

1. If you could be assured of not being caught or punished, how likely would you be to rape?
2. If you could be assured of not being caught or punished, how likely would you be to force a woman to engage in sexual contact?

Machismo ($\alpha=.75$)

1. Being roughed up is sexually stimulating to many women.
2. Many times a woman will pretend she doesn't want to have intercourse because she doesn't want to seem easy, but she's really hoping the man will force her.
3. It is better for a woman to use her feminine charm to get what she wants rather than ask for it outright.
4. No matter what people say, women really like men to dominate them.
5. Most women have little respect for physically weak men.

Victim Blame ($\alpha=.74$)

1. A woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on their first date implies that she is willing to have sex.
2. Any healthy woman can successfully resist a rapist if she really wants to.
3. When women go around braless or wearing short skirts and tight tops, they are just asking for trouble.
4. In the majority of rapes, the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation.

5. If a girl engages in necking or petting and she lets things get out of hand, it is her own fault if her partner forces sex on her.
6. Many women have an unconscious desire to be raped, and may then unconsciously set up a situation in which they are likely to be attacked.
7. If a woman gets drunk at a party and has intercourse with a man she has just met there, she should be considered “fair game” to other males at the party who want to have sex with her too, whether she wants to or not.
8. Women provoke men to rape them.

Equating Rape with Sex ($\alpha=.77$)

1. Men rape for sexual pleasure.
2. Rape is merely a way to get sex.
3. Raped women enjoy the sexual part of rape.
4. Victims imagine the rapes to be worse than they actually were.
5. Men rape due to frustrations from lack of sexual opportunities.

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

The research is being conducted by Ashley Ubelhor and Jacquelyn Wessler, Psychology majors at Hanover College. The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to examine beliefs related to sexual assault. During the survey, you may be asked to answer questions you may regard as personal.

The entire survey should not take more than 15 minutes. There are no known risks involved in being in the study, beyond those of everyday life. The information you provide during the study is completely anonymous; at no time will your name be associated with the response you give. If during or after this study any concerns arise regarding personal issues, please contact Gary Petiprin or Katie Dine-Young at Hanover College Counseling Services at 812.866.7399 or campus extension 470.

Questions about this study can be addressed to Ashley Ubelhor by phone 812.430.3451 or by email at ubelhora@hanover.edu or Jacquelyn Wessler by phone 812.866.7510 or by email wesslerj@hanover.edu.

I acknowledge that I am participating in this study of my own free will. I understand that I may refuse to participate or stop participating at any time. If I wish, I will be given a copy of this consent form.

Signature

Date

Table 1. *Frequencies of reported sexual assault experiences*

Sexual assault experiences	Women (N=171)		Men (N=79)	
	N	%	N	%
1. Have you had sexual intercourse with a man (woman) when you (she) didn't want to because you (she) felt pressured by his (your) continual arguments?	30	17.8	2	2.5
2. Has a man (you) given you (a woman) alcohol or drugs so that he (you) could have sex with you (her) when you (she) didn't want to?	31	18.3	10	12.7
3. Have you engaged in sex acts (e.g. anal or oral intercourse or penetration by objects other than the penis) with a man (woman) when you (she) didn't want to because he (you) threatened or used physical force if you (she) didn't cooperate?	10	5.9	0	0
4. Have you had sexual intercourse with a man when you didn't want to because he threatened or used physical force (e.g. twisting your arm, holding you down, etc.) if you didn't cooperate?	17	10.1	0	0

Table 2. Mean scores for female sexual assault Victims and Non-victim in Victim Blame, Equating Sex with Rape, and Machismo

Theme	Victim	Non-Victim	T-test results
Victim Blame	2.24	2.35	$t(154)=1.20, p=.23$
Equating Rape with Sex	2.68	2.59	$t(154)=.62, p=.54$
Machismo	2.69	2.64	$t(154)=.33, p=.74$

Table 3. *Correlations between examined themes. All correlations are significant at $p < .05$.*

Theme	Victim Blame	Equating Rape with Sex	Machismo	Propensity
Victim Blame		.41	.54	.33
Equating Rape with Sex			.39	.30
Machismo				.28

Table 4. *Frequency chart for Males' Intent to Rape*

Propensity	Frequency	Percent
1.00	56	71.8
1.50	5	6.4
2.00	6	7.7
2.50	3	3.8
3.00	2	2.6
3.50	3	3.8
4.00	1	1.3
4.50	0	0
5.00	1	1.3
5.50	0	0
6.00	1	1.3

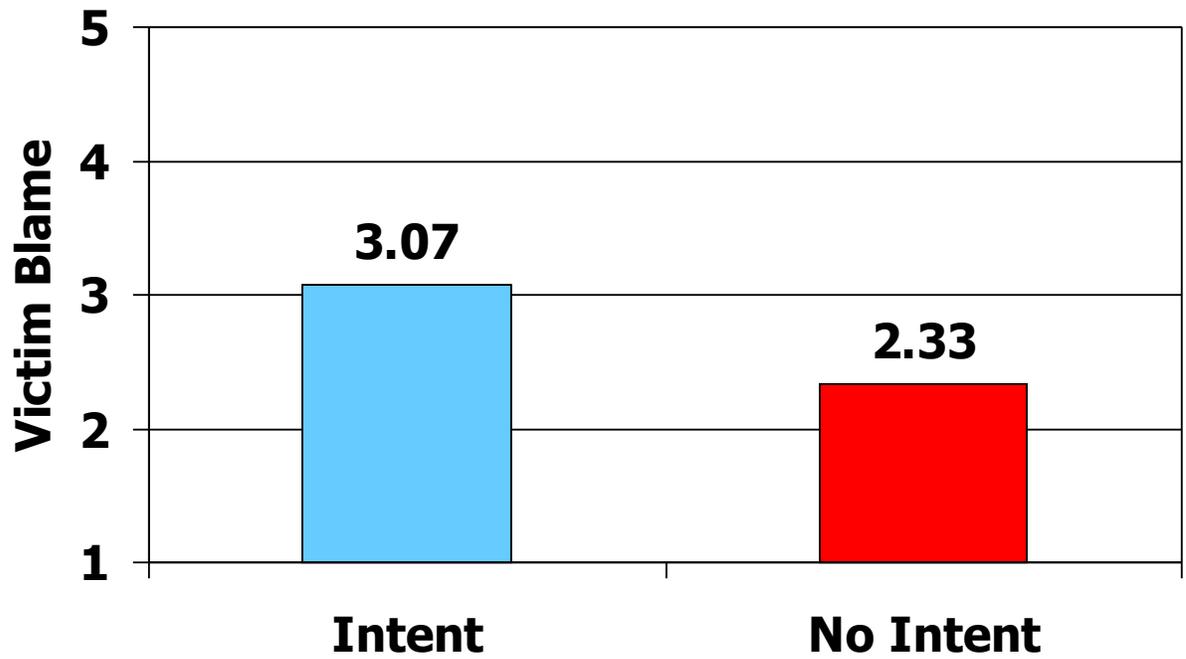


Figure 1. Male's reported levels of Victim Blame in relation to Intent to commit sexual assault

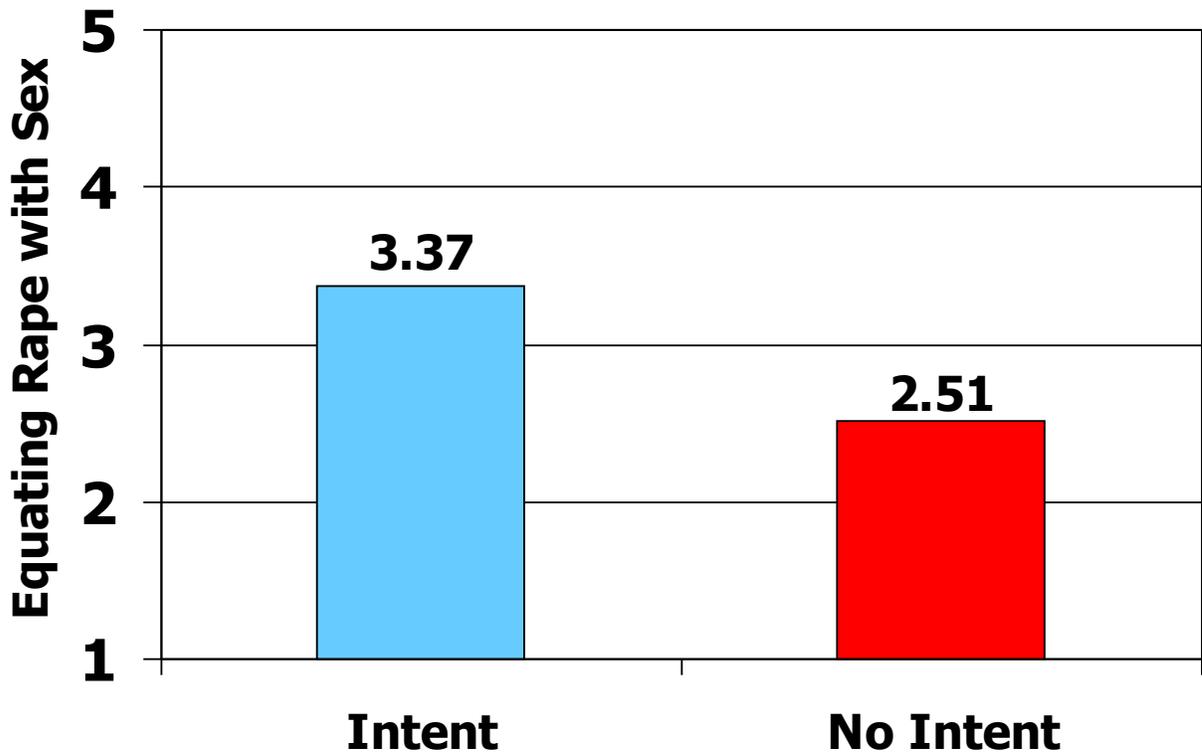


Figure 2. Male's reported levels of Equating Rape with Sex in relation to Intent to commit sexual assault

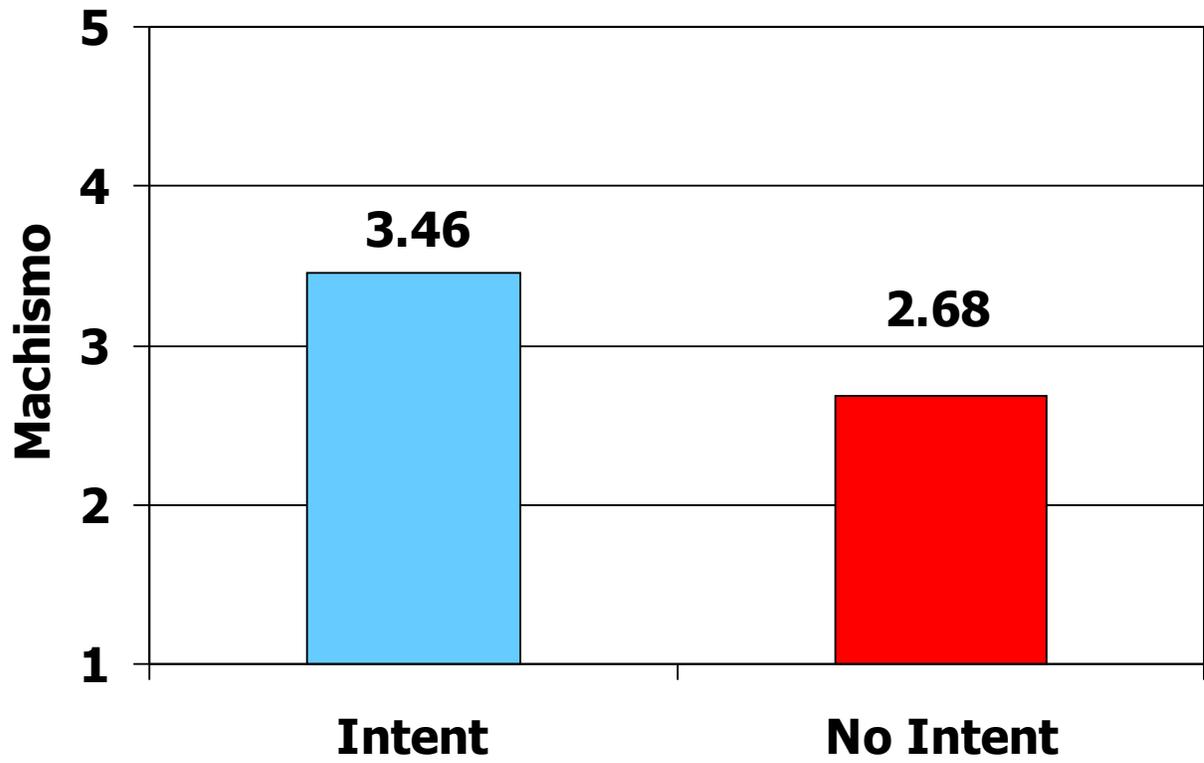


Figure 3. Male's reported levels of Machismo in relation to Intent to commit sexual assault

