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# Sexism and how it mediates the relationship between gender and rape myth acceptance

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**SEXISM AND HOW IT MEDIATES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
GENDER AND RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE**

by  
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A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Psychology  
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## **Abstract**

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SEXISM AND HOW IT MEDIATES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER  
AND RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE

2014-2015

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Rape is a significant social and health problem in the United States with around 17.7 million women being forcibly raped at some time in their lives. While a rape-supportive culture and victim blame are concepts that aid in explaining rape, understanding societal held ideas about rape and traditional gender role beliefs can explain. Therefore, the present study focuses on how ambivalent sexist belief structures mediate the relationship between gender and rape myth acceptance. It was hypothesized that ambivalent sexism (AS) when divided into its four separate concepts: hostile (HS), protective paternalism (PP), complementary gender differentiation (CGD), and heterosexual intimacy (HI), that each would mediate the relationship between gender and rape myth acceptance (RMA). Participants were 626 college students (51% male) who completed the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) and the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA). Mediation analyses were tested using the bootstrapping method with bias-corrected confidence estimates. It was found that HS, CGD, and HI mediated the relationship between gender and RMA. This suggests that the role of traditional gender role beliefs is facilitating victim blame and a rape-supportive culture.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **Sexual Assault and Rape**

One out of every five American women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime (Black et al., 2011). Rape is a concept that falls under the umbrella term of sexual assault and can be conceptualized as vaginal, anal, or oral sexual intercourse obtained through force or threat of force, a lack of consent, or inability to give consent due to age, intoxication, or mental status (Abbey, Zawacki, Buck, Clinton, McAuslan, 2004; Jozkowski, Sanders, Peterson, Dennis, & Reece, 2014). Sexual assault includes a wide range of behaviors, such as attacks or attempted attacks involving unwanted sexual contact between victim and offender, which may involve force and include such behaviors as grabbing, fondling, or verbal threats (Bureau, 2014). While occasionally used synonymously, rape is generally considered a legal term focusing on specific unwanted, non-consensual sexual acts.

Rape is a significant social and health problem in the United States with about 17.7 million women and 2.8 million men forcibly raped at some time in their lives (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006). A large percentage of rapes occur in late adolescence and early adulthood, with college women at higher risk than women in the general population (Abbey, et al., 2004; Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000). While both men and women can experience rape, the majority of victims are women and the majority of perpetrators are men (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006). Also, most perpetrators are known to victims, including colleagues, friends, dating partners, or spouses (Fisher et al., 2000; Tjaden &

Thoennes, 2006). As a result, many rapes go unreported, since many women are hesitant to bring charges against an acquaintance.

### **Impact of Rape on Health and Wellness**

Rape survivors often experience a variety of negative consequences as a direct result of their assault. These include posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, insomnia, chronic pain, diabetes, anxiety, and eating disorders (Basile & Saltzman, 2002; Aronowitz, Lambert, & Davidoff, 2012; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006). Survivors may also experience a lack of emotional stability following a rape, such as difficulties with trust and safety, and an increase of suicide risk (Aronowitz et al., 2012). As a result, many individuals who have been raped frequently employ negative coping mechanisms to deal with the trauma, including high-risk sexual behavior, illicit substance or alcohol abuse, and other negative health behaviors (Ullman, Filipas, Townsend, & Starzynski, 2006; Basile & Saltzman, 2002).

Given that victims often know the person who assaulted them, many women choose not to report their rape for reasons such as fear of retaliation from their rapist, shame or embarrassment about what happened to them, or the thought that their rape was a minor incident and not a police matter (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006). In fact, estimates suggest that only 36% of rapes are reported to police (Rennison, 2002). Even when a rape is reported, rates of arrest, prosecution, and conviction are relatively low (Alderden & Ullman, 2012). Victimization is often minimized relative to other crimes, for example, victims are often viewed with skepticism or blame, and observers maintain a tendency to justify the actions of the perpetrator (Bieneck & Krahe, 2011; Sizemore, 2013). One



reason for the lack of reporting include the concepts of victim blame and rape-supportive culture that are often encountered among peers and members of the criminal justice system, ultimately discouraging victims from reporting to not only the police, but also to friends and health providers (Vonderhaar & Carmody, 2014).

### **Victim Blame and the Rape Supportive Culture at College**

Victim blaming occurs as a result of a belief system that suggests that there are no innocent victims. This “just world” viewpoint notes that if something bad has happened to someone, they must have done something to deserve it or even cause it (Hammond, Berry, & Rodriguez, 2011). As a result there is a tendency to blame a rape victim for her assault as a protective mechanism to corroborate the mindset that rape cannot happen to a good person (Strömwall, Alfredsson, & Landström, 2013). It is this widely held belief that may discourage victims from seeking help.

While college campuses represent an environment that has few persons with criminal records, and therefore considered non- threatening (Aronowitz, Lambert, & Davidoff, 2012), research demonstrates that the chances of victimization are four times greater for college women than for non-college women in that age range (Burnett, Mattern, Herakova, Kahl, Tobola, & Bornsen, 2009). College is an example of one environment where rape can occur, other environments include but are not limited to jails, homes, cars, and residential facilities, and it can happen to any person at any age. It is believed that the college environment creates a rape-supportive culture through social norms, therefore, placing college age women at an increased risk for victimization (Jazkowski et. al., 2014). For example, college campuses provide very few and minor

consequences for perpetrators, leaving women feeling powerless with a perceived lack of confidentiality in reporting (Aronowitz, Lambert, & Davidoff, 2012). In fact, 80% of victimizations for college age students are unreported, compared to 67% of same aged nonstudents (Sinozich & Langton, 2014). The college atmosphere facilitates a culture that makes it difficult for victims to seek help. While a rape-supportive culture and victim blaming are broad explanations for this, understanding how societal held ideas about rape and sexist traditional gender role beliefs, can clarify the reasons for the lack of reporting from victims, and aid in education on the rape-supportive culture.

### **Rape Myths**

Rape myths are defined as prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, and rapists, creating a climate hostile to rape victims (Burt, 1980). They serve to justify a patriarchal society where men are the dominant sex. Their purpose is to not only deny but to justify male sexual aggression against women, placing women at a disadvantage in society, for example, women who dress provocatively are “asking” to be raped (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999). Social norms in the college environment heighten myths to be a common and often typical belief patterns, further engraining the myths (Burnett et al., 2000). Individuals who endorse rape myths are more likely to attribute blame to the victim, believing that they could have avoided the incident by modifying their behavior in some way (Clark & Lawson, 2009), such as not drinking as much or not dressing provocatively. Rape-supporting individuals normalize and even condone rape by providing very few consequences for the perpetrators when a rape is reported (Aronowitz et al., 2012).

Belief in rape myths suggest that people are more likely to attend to evidence in which women are derogated, as opposed to being rewarded for sexual activity (Marks & Fraley, 2006). This may ultimately discourage women to label their unwanted sexual experiences as rape because of the overall social acceptance of rape myths and the possibility of retaliation mentioned previously (Burnett et al., 2000). The act of victim blaming is problematic because it significantly interferes with the recovery process, in that victims are less likely to report or get services in fear of being at fault for the incident, as previously stated (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995).

Given that the majority of rape victims are women, most of the research on rape myths examines mens' acceptance of rape myths in relation to their likelihood to perpetrate (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006). Men who are more accepting of rape myths show greater victim blaming and less sexual knowledge (Aronowitz et al., 2012). Also, men who perpetrate endorse higher levels of hostility toward women, sexual dominance, acceptance of interpersonal violence, and rape myth acceptance than non-perpetrators (Parkhill & Abbey, 2008). A higher acceptance of rape myths was reported by men who pledge in fraternities, athletes, those without previous rape education, and those who did not know someone that has been sexually assaulted (McMahon, 2010).

Research suggests that compared to men, women endorse less agreement with rape myths, but they still maintain such beliefs. Women may share the same beliefs as men because they live in a male-dominated society, and from that society they have been taught to avoid certain things in order to minimize their risk of rape or sexual assault (Vonderhaar & Carmody, 2014). It is believed that for women, the function of rape myth

acceptance is to deny their own personal vulnerability (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995), believing that only “certain types of women” or women who “dress a certain way” get sexually assaulted in an attempt to protect themselves. While research states that men may endorse rape myths more often, it is believed that women are also capable of holding similar gender role attitudes.

### **Sexism and Traditional Gender Role Beliefs**

While the endorsement of rape myth is one explanation for a rape-supportive culture; another explanation is endorsement of traditional gender role beliefs. Sexism in society is thought to be fostered by traditional gender roles created by different cultures, with patriarchal societies placing conformity pressure on men and women to develop and enact what they consider to be gender-appropriate roles and self-images (Glick and Fiske, 2002). These social norms suggest that men and women maintain different sexual roles in society, leading to a set of expectancies about prescribed behaviors to which men and women must adhere; adding to this idea of a rape-supportive culture (Grubb & Turner, 2012). Belief systems about rape are strongly connected to deeply held, pervasive attitudes and ambivalence, such as sex role stereotyping, distrust of the opposite sex, and acceptance of interpersonal violence (Burt, 1980). While it is believed that men endorse traditional gender role beliefs more than women, research suggests that women who endorse traditional gender role beliefs attributed less fault and responsibility to perpetrators than did women who identified as having non-traditional beliefs (Ong & Ward, 2006). Ambivalent sexism is a form of traditional gender role beliefs, attitudes, and feelings that exist and predicts discrimination against women (Glick and Fiske,

2002). Even though stereotypes of women contain many positive traits, the positive traits relate to emotions, portraying women as being nice but incompetent at many important tasks (Glick & Fiske, 1996). It has been argued that the relationship between an individuals' acceptance of rape myths and endorsing more negative belief systems can influence negative stereotypical attitudes (Begany & Milburn, 2002), thus further explaining victim blame and the rape-supportive culture.

Ambivalent sexism is comprised of two variations of sexist beliefs: hostile and benevolent (Glick, Fiske, Mladinis, Saiz, Abrams, Masser, and...Lopez, 2000). Hostile sexism is the derogation of women who defy traditional gender roles. It is frequently used as a justification for male domination and traditional roles by asserting that women should not dominate men and instead be content with their prescribed role in society (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2007). For men, these beliefs reflect the desire to dominate women and exploit them as sexual objects, an example is that women exaggerate the existence of sexism and the struggle for power (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Traditional women who exhibit hostile sexism illustrate that there are negative views against non-traditional women who want to do away with gender-role distinctions (Glick & Fiske, 1997).

Similarly, benevolent sexism is defined as a set of interrelated attitudes toward women which are sexist in terms of viewing women stereotypically in restricted roles, but are positive in tone and also tend to extract behaviors typically categorized as pro-social (Glick & Fiske, 1996). This belief system justifies male domination, but does so by rewarding women who know their place in society and do not try to take over male power

(Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2007). One benevolent belief is that women should be cherished and protected by men.

The benevolent sexism construct is comprised of three separate components to further describe this belief structure: protective paternalism, complementary gender differentiation, and heterosexual intimacy. Protective paternalism is evident in the traditional male gender-role of provider and protector of the home (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Complementary gender differentiation beliefs suggest that women hold admiration for men's stereotypical abilities which explains why men, and not women, are in power (Chapleau et al., 2007). Finally, heterosexual intimacy suggest that the purpose of a woman is to exist as a sexual and compliant partner (Chapleau et al., 2007). A man's dependency on a women creates an unusual situation in which members of a more powerful group are dependent on members of a subordinate group. In traditional society, sex is viewed as a resource for which women act as the gatekeepers, creating a vulnerability that men may resent. The belief that women use their sexual allure to gain dominance over men is associated with hostility toward women, but for some men, a sexual attraction toward a woman may be inseparable from a desire to dominate them (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

### **Current Study**

In summary, 25% of women report at least one experience of victimization since the age of 18 (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006) with college women at higher risk for sexual assault than women in the general population (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000). The concept of victim blame may provide a rationale for why many women do not report their

assault. Victim blame often occurs in context of a rape-supporting culture, which may be driven by beliefs in rape myths and support for traditional gender roles. The endorsement of rape myths places women at a disadvantage not only in observer attitudes, but also with attitudes about one's self. They leave women with feelings of being at fault for their assault, making it difficult to seek help. Similarly, hostile and benevolent sexism can be viewed as complementary ideologies that serve to maintain and justify male dominance over women (Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003).

Adding to prior research on the rape supportive culture, the current study utilized a mediation analysis to explain how ambivalent sexism governed the relationship between gender and rape myth acceptance. Specifically, four mediation analyses were completed by separating the ambivalent sexism subscales: hostile sexism, protective paternalism, complementary gender differentiation, and heterosexual intimacy, to see how each mediated the relationship between sexism and rape myth acceptance. It was hypothesized that each construct would mediate the relationship between gender and rape myth acceptance.

## Chapter 2

### Method

#### Participants and Demographics

A total of 626 undergraduates (51% male and 49% female) from a mid-sized state University in the northeastern United States completed the study. The mean age of the participants at the time they completed the study was 19.47 ( $SD = 2.56$ , range 18-58). The majority of the participants self-identified as Caucasian/Non-Hispanic (72.8%,  $N = 456$ ), followed by African American/Black (11.7%,  $N = 73$ ), Hispanic/Latina (9.4%,  $N = 59$ ), Asian/Pacific Islander (3%,  $N = 19$ ), and other (3%,  $N = 19$ ).

#### Measures

**Ambivalent Sexism Inventory.** *The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory* (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996) is a 22-item self-report inventory measuring individual levels of ambivalent sexism. It consists of two 11-item subscales, hostile and benevolent sexism. Items on all subscales are rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale ( $0 = strongly disagree$ ,  $5 = strongly agree$ ) and averaged. Higher scores reflect greater endorsement of sexist beliefs. Participants indicate their level of agreement with statements concerning male and female relationships (Abrams, et al., 2003). Each component reflects a set of beliefs in which ambivalence toward women is inherent and which serves to justify or explain the underlying social and biological conditions that characterize relationships between the sexes (Glick & Fiske, 1996). While hostile sexism ( $\alpha = .87$ ) is a unitary construct, benevolent sexism ( $\alpha = .78$ ) has three subscales: protective paternalism, complementary gender differentiation, and heterosexual intimacy (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Examples of



items are “when women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against,” (hostile sexism) and “a good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man,” (benevolent sexism).

**Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale.** *The Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale* (IRMA; Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999) is a self-report, 45-item measure developed to assess endorsement of rape myth attitudes and beliefs, measured on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) - 7 (*strongly agree*) Likert scale and averaged. Higher scores reflect higher level of rape myths. Examples of items include, “a lot of women lead a man on and then they cry rape,” and “a woman who dresses in skimpy clothes should not be surprised if a man tries to force her to have sex.” The IRMA is based on exploratory and confirmatory multivariate analyses of rape myths in addition to six studies demonstrating good psychometric properties in regard to reliability ( $\alpha = .91$ ) and construct validity.

### **Procedure**

This project was part of a larger study on perceptions of sexual assault, including attributions of victim blame and perpetrator blame. Interested participants were recruited via the psychology department’s electronic subject pool. Participants were enrolled in an introductory psychology course. Participants reported to a computer lab that contained ten computers separated by privacy screens to ensure confidentiality. Participants were assigned to a computer, where they read and signed a hard copy of the informed consent. They were informed that data collection was anonymous, and that they could cease participation in the study at any time without penalty. After completing their materials, participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

## Chapter 3

### Results

Mediation analyses using the Hayes (2009) bootstrapping method was used to test our hypothesis that sexist beliefs would mediate the relationship between gender and rape myth acceptance. Simulation research shows that bootstrapping is one of the more valid and powerful methods for testing intervening variable effects (Hayes, 2009). For this reason it was the method of choice to test the relationship between gender and rape myth acceptance through the proposed mediator of ambivalent sexist beliefs. Prior to the primary analyses, the ASI and IRMA scales were scored by calculating a mean score for all four ASI subscales and the overall IRMA scale. Gender was dummy coded with 1 = men and 2 = women. An independent samples t-test was used to compare differences between men and women on their IRMA and ASI scores. In addition, all scores were subjected to correlational analyses. Finally, four separate mediation analyses were conducted to reflect each of the four subscales: hostile sexism and the three subscales of benevolent sexism: protective paternalism, complementary gender differentiation, and heterosexual intimacy.

A series of Independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare scores on the IRMA and the ASI between men and women. There was a significant difference on total IRMA scores for men and women, ( $t= 9.01$ ,  $p < .05$ , 95% CI [.44-.69]),  $ES= .73$ . Specifically, men ( $M= 2.78$ ) endorsed higher levels of rape myths than women ( $M= 2.21$ ). Examination of Cohens D suggests this is a moderate effect. There were also significant differences between men and women on several subscales of the ASI. Men

( $M= 2.73$ ) exhibited significantly higher levels of hostile sexism ( $t= 6.15, p <.05, 95\%$  CI [.27-.53]),  $ES= .47$ , than women ( $M= 2.33$ ). Protective paternalism ( $t= 2.30, p <.05, 95\%$  CI [.02-.31]) also exhibited a significant difference,  $ES= .18$ . Specifically, men ( $M= 3.06$ ) endorsed higher levels of protective paternalism than women ( $M= 2.89$ ). Examination of Cohens D suggests this is a small effect. Women ( $M= 2.59$ ) demonstrated more complementary gender differentiation ( $t= -7.16, p <.05, 95\%$  CI [-.69- -.39]) than men ( $M= 2.04$ ). There was no significant difference between men and women and how they endorsed benevolent sexism and heterosexual intimacy.

Correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between gender, rape myth acceptance, and the four subscales of the ASI. This analysis (table 1) replicated previous research in that rape myth acceptance was positively related to hostile sexism ( $r = 0.53, p < 0.001$ ); Therefore, individuals with high hostile sexism beliefs were more likely to endorse rape myth acceptance. There was also a positive relationship between rape myth acceptance and benevolent sexism ( $r = 0.23, p < 0.001$ ). In regard to specific subscales, the heterosexual intimacy was positively correlated to rape myth acceptance ( $r = 0.26, p < 0.001$ ). This demonstrated that individuals who had more heterosexual intimacy endorsed more rape myths.

Table 1  
*Correlations Among Continuous Variables*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. HS	-	.234**	.211**	.099*	.199**	.530**
2. BS		-	.816**	.649**	.761**	.234**
3. PP			-	.392**	.411**	.168**
4. CGD				-	.194**	.065
5. HI					-	.264**
6. IRMA						-
<i>M</i> (SD)	2.5(.84)	2.8(.73)	3(.94)	2.3(.99)	2.9(1.0)	2.5(.84)
$\alpha$	.697	.558	.627	.667	.644	.702
<i>N</i>	626	626	626	626	626	626

*Note.* . HS=Hostile Sexism; BS=Benevolent Sexism; PP=Protective Paternalism; CGD=Complementary Gender Differentiation; HI= Heterosexual Intimacy; IRMA= Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale; \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$

Mediation effects were tested using the bootstrapping method with bias-corrected confidence estimates. In the present study, the 95% confidence interval of the indirect effects was obtained with 5000 bootstrap samples. The indirect effects are estimated by re-sampling with replacement, this produces a confidence interval which will be adjusted for bias. According to Hayes (2009), if zero is not included in this, one can conclude that the indirect effect is significant. Results of the mediation analysis confirmed the mediating role of hostile sexism in the relation between gender and IRMA ( $b = -7.64$ ;  $BCa = -10.52$  to  $-5.13$ ). In regards to the benevolent sexism scale, results of the mediation analysis confirmed the mediating role of protective paternalism in the relation between gender and IRMA ( $b = -0.85$ ;  $BCa = -1.99$  to  $-0.13$ ), as well as complementary

gender differentiation in the relation between gender and IRMA ( $b = 3.18$ ;  $BCa = 1.81$  to  $5$ ). However, heterosexual intimacy did not mediate the relationship between gender and IRMA ( $b = -0.90$ ;  $BCa = -2.25$  to  $0.46$ ).

## **Chapter 4**

### **Discussion**

The goal of this study is to determine whether traditional gender role beliefs mediate the relationship between gender and rape myth acceptance. Traditional gender role beliefs are facilitating the relationship between gender and the endorsement of rape myths, further engraining victim blaming behavior in society. It was found that regardless of gender, it is sexist beliefs that are driving the victim blaming behavior ultimately adding to a rape-supportive culture. Research tells us that this behavior is leading to many negative health and social consequences for victims, specifically at the college age. While no study goes without its limitations, the focus here should be on future directions, and how this research is going to expand and educate what is already known about victim blame and the rape supportive culture. Future research in this field would do well to reduce the focus on gender and instead seek to understand the role of gender beliefs in understanding perceptions of sexual assault victims.

The value of the current study should be interpreted in the context of the research and the sample used. As previously stated, college is believed to be a non-threatening environment with very few studies possessing criminal records (Aronowitz, Lambert, & Davidoff, 2012). While the use of college students has its criticisms when aiming to make adjustments to the general population, the use of college students in this context seems applicable, especially with the high prevalence of sexual assault that occurs on campuses across the nation. Thus, college students not only represent an important population to examine, but also represent a group of individuals suitable for prevention

and intervention services. Typical prevention programs administered to college students are up to two hours in length with key features of programs including: information regarding the prevalence rates of sexual assault among college students, debunking of rape mythology, discussion of sex role socialization practices, identification of risk-related dating behaviors, and induction of empathy for rape survivors (Breitenbecher, 2001).

Analysis demonstrated that when placed into the bootstrapping model, heterosexual intimacy does not mediate the relationship between gender and rape myth acceptance. An explanation of why heterosexual intimacy did not mediate the relationship could be explained by the positive correlation to the IRMA. Individuals who had more heterosexual intimacy endorsed more rape myths. Since this construct is an agreement that women are necessary as romantic partners for men, it could be argued that men feel as though they have the right to take sex from women because that is the only purpose of a woman. This view of women is very negative, similar to rape myths. It could also be argued that men do not agree or want to accept that women are the “sexual gatekeepers” and that women do not hold this dominance over men. Sex is popularly viewed as a resource for which women act as the gatekeepers, creating a vulnerability that men may resent. For women, it can mean that they do not want to endorse a belief that they are “necessary romantic partners” for men due to the idea that it would further endorse their inferiority in society.

A factor that was not assessed in this study that could have provided interesting information is socioeconomic information. Household size and demographics are

different than they were 20-40 years ago. Households can vary more in terms of extended family, multiple families, and single parent households, and income source may be more varied than it once was. Factors such as these could decrease the endorsement of traditional gender roles. Many of the participants, looking at the mean age, could have experienced a situation where the father is the “breadwinner” and the mother either stays at home or is not the main source of income. If we look back at history, this statement could have still held true in the 1980s and 1990s, while today this belief may not be the standard in current society. A future direction of this research should look at generational differences to see if the relationship between traditional gender role beliefs and rape myth acceptance changes over time as household responsibilities, such as income source has shifted. Providing information on the endorsement of a rape supportive culture across socioeconomic levels can not only expand knowledge of the culture but also aid in the educational aspect in prevention and awareness programs.

Traditional gender role beliefs aid in understanding why victim blame and a rape-supportive culture exist in society. This research can help aid in legal proceedings, and rape prevention programs. Having more information on these beliefs can also benefit educators, and college staff when facilitating orientations for incoming students. Much of the education provided to students often reinforces gendered social norms that restrict the behavior of women, explaining what is appropriate for them to do in public or that they should have a “buddy-system” when walking around at night or at a party (Strömwall, Alfredsson, & Landström, 2013). Of the three published investigations into sexual assault prevention programs, two found that a sexual assault prevention program



was not effective in reducing the incidence of victimization among women, while the other investigation found that a program was effective but only for women without histories of sexual assault (Breitenbecher, 2001). Interventions should focus more on the education on what rape and sexual assault are and what the health and legal consequences entail. Promoting and educating individuals on egalitarian beliefs about sex could not only increase the likelihood for victims to report, but could lessen the behaviors themselves.

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