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Gender and University Athletic Status as Factors in Rape Myth Acceptance

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Eastern Illinois University

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**Gender and University Athletic Status as
Factors in Rape Myth Acceptance**

BY

Johanna L. Moore

1973 -

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Specialist in School Psychology

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1998
YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
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GENDER AND UNIVERSITY ATHLETIC STATUS
AS FACTORS IN RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE

BY JOHANNA L. MOORE

B.A., Eastern Illinois University, 1995

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Specialist in School Psychology
in the Graduate College of
Eastern Illinois University, 1998

ABSTRACT

Two hundred eighty-seven students representing each of the four undergraduate levels and the graduate level participated in this study. Participants completed questions about personal characteristics and the long form of the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale developed by Diana Payne (1993). A 2 X 2 analysis of variance was used to assess the effects of gender and athletic status (intercollegiate athlete vs. nonathlete) on the overall RMA score and seven subscale scores. Results showed that men had higher rape myth acceptance than women on all subscale scores and total RMA scale. Athletes as a group had higher RMA than nonathletes on total RMA and six of seven subscales. On the subscale He Didn't Mean To/Couldn't Help It, a significant interaction indicated that gender was not a factor on the subscale scores for athletes whereas it was a factor for nonathletes.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CRITIQUE

Rape and Sexual Assault

Numerous studies have indicated that rape in America is a serious problem that warrants attention (Burt, 1980; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1993; Koss, 1992; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1989; Warshaw, 1988). However, rape is the most underreported crime in America (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1993); estimates suggest that perhaps fewer than 10% of rapes are reported to the authorities (Koss, 1992). Thus, police figures are probably not accurate indicators of actual rape occurrences. Rape and sexual assault most likely occur much more often than what is reported to police. According to Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski (1989), 3 to 10 rapes occur for every 1 rape reported to police. Warshaw (1988) reports that many women leave a sexual assault unreported to authorities, especially if the perpetrator is an acquaintance. Women are often reluctant to come forward to report a rape crime due to their concern that they may not be believed, or that they will be blamed for the rape.

Surveys of Female College Students. Surveys of female college students have yielded alarming rates of sexual victimization. A survey of women by Koss et al. (1989) indicated that 15.4% of the respondents had been sexually assaulted, and another 12.2% were victims of attempted sexual assault. Harrington and Leitenburg (1994) surveyed nearly 1,000 university women from New England using the Sexual Experiences Survey, which

assesses sexual experiences associated with various degrees of coercion, threat, and force. Of the participants, 25% revealed being victims of sexual aggression involving physical force or threats of force by an acquaintance. Similar studies have yielded consistent results (e.g., Aizenman & Kelley, 1988; Koss, 1985). In their studies of sexual victimization, Amick and Calhoun (1987) and Russell (1984) found that over 50% of female respondents reported attempted rape and/or rape victimization experiences. In a survey at a large university, Fritner and Robinson (1993) found that 27.1% of female respondents reported having been sexually victimized.

Surveys of Male College Students. Researchers have also examined men's experiences involving sexual assault. In a survey of male college undergraduates, 15% reported being involved in acts of sexual assault, 61% admitted to fondling a woman's breast against her will, and 37% said they had touched a woman's genitals against her will (Rappaport & Burkhart, 1984). In another survey, 23% of male respondents admitted to forcing a woman to have unwilling intercourse (Koss & Oros, 1982).

Men between the ages of 20 and 24 have been found to be the group most likely to rape (Russell, 1982), and the group most likely to be victims of rape are women between the ages of 20 and 24 (Russell, 1982). Because many college students fall in this age group, there is an obvious need to reduce sexual violence and victimization on college campuses. To this end, it might be helpful to identify men who are particularly likely to support

rape myth attitudes, so that efforts to reduce these attitudes and behaviors can be made.

Rape Myths and Blame Attributions

There is a prevalent social force in our society that dismisses rape or attempted rape victimization experiences. Rape myths, which are prevalent in our society, are part of a culture that supports the idea that rape-related behaviors are acceptable (Burt, 1980; Payne, 1993). According to Burt (1980), rape myths are attitudes and beliefs about false myths of rape that are stereotypical and prejudicial. Rape myths also tend to focus the blame on victims of rape or sexual assault. High rape myth acceptance is reflected in statements such as "women ask for it"; "women 'cry rape' only when they've been jilted or have something to cover up"; "rapists are sex-starved, insane, or both"; "only bad girls get raped"; "any healthy woman can resist a rapist if she really wants to". According to Burt (1980), rape myths are strongly associated with attitudes such as sex-role stereotyping, distrust of the opposite sex, and acceptance of interpersonal violence.

Studies of Rape Myth Acceptance. Burt (1980) interviewed 598 male and female adults of various ages from Minnesota and had them complete a rape myth acceptance scale that she developed. Background information about the participants included their age, gender, occupational status, and education. Items concerning experience with intrafamilial violence, whether or not they were a victim of sexual assault, prior exposure to sexual assault

victims, and exposure to the media were assessed. Rape supportive attitudes in this group were found to be strongly associated with sex-role stereotyping, distrust of the opposite sex, and acceptance of interpersonal violence. In fact, acceptance of interpersonal violence was the best predictor of rape myth acceptance. Additionally, younger and better educated participants supported attitudes that were less stereotypic and less likely to be characterized by proviolence. In other words, they had lower rape myth acceptance. Over 50% of the respondents agreed with rape myth supportive statements such as "A woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on the first date implies she is willing to have sex" and "In the majority of rapes, the victim was promiscuous or had a bad reputation". Over half of participants indicated that they believed that 50% or more of reported rapes were reported as rape only because the woman was trying to get back at a man she was angry with or because she was trying to cover up an illegitimate pregnancy.

Additional research supports a correlation between rape myth acceptance and acceptance of violence against women, adversarial sexual beliefs, sexual conservatism, and stereotypical sex-role attitudes (Check & Malamuth, 1985; Kalof & Wade, 1995; Malamuth, 1981). Kalof and Wade (1995) and Malamuth (1981) found results that support the correlation between rape myth acceptance and acceptance of interpersonal violence. Both studies provide support for Burt's (1980) conclusions about the attitudinal structure of rape myth acceptance.

Furthermore, support has also been found for a correlation between rape myth acceptance and factors such as acceptance of sexual aggression and hostility toward women. In a study of 492 undergraduates at a large midwestern university, the relationship between hostility toward women and rape myth acceptance was found to be stronger for men than for women. It seems that hostility is a powerful concept in men's cognitive understanding of rape (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). For the 94 undergraduate men surveyed, a positive relationship was found between the tendency to abuse and the acceptance of rape myths. According to Peterson and Franzese (1987), high rape myth acceptance is also strongly correlated with sexist views of women. Additionally, men who indicated a higher likelihood of committing rape, compared to other men who self-reported a lower likelihood of ever committing a rape, had a higher acceptance of aggression against women (Briere & Malamuth, 1983; Malamuth, 1981).

Male undergraduate college students have been placed in hypothetical scenarios where they indicated their personal likelihood of raping a woman if they were guaranteed not to be caught (Malamuth, 1981). Of the male participants in one such study, 35% indicated some likelihood that they would rape a woman. In another study, 60% of the male college participants reported a likelihood to rape or to use sexual force against a woman, given the absence of penalty (Briere & Malamuth, 1983). These men scored higher on rape attitudes and beliefs than men who said they would not be likely to rape or use sexual force on

a woman. These rape attitudes and beliefs indicated support for victims being responsible for their rapes, acceptance of domestic violence, male dominance justification, adversarial sexual beliefs, and women enjoying sexual violence. These data suggest an acceptance by men of sexual aggression against women.

Gender Differences in RMA

Rape myth acceptance consistently differs between men and women. In general, men are more likely to be supportive of rape myths than women (Bridges, 1991; Feild, 1978; Holcomb, Holcomb, Sondag, & Williams, 1991; Jenkins & Dambrot, 1987; Lanis & Covell, 1995; Malamuth & Check, 1981; Margolin, Miller, & Moran, 1989; Mori, Bernat, Glenn, Selle, & Zarate, 1995). In a study conducted by Giacomassi and Dull (1986), a total of 449 college students completed a questionnaire dealing with attitudes toward dating, sexual aggression, and false beliefs about rape. A total of nine rape myth items were included in the questionnaire, and participants indicated their responses using a 5-point Likert scale. Rape myth items assessed participants' perceptions of the rape offense, the victim, and the offenders. Men were found to have significantly higher agreement in support of rape myths than women.

Kalof and Wade (1995) surveyed 383 undergraduate students using a modified version of four standard scales from Burt's (1980) RMA scale. Also included were 11 items measuring sexual victimization experiences. The findings were that men scored higher on RMA and were more likely than women to have traditional

views about gender and sexuality. Women reported more sexual coercion experiences than men, and were much less likely than men to endorse attitudes supportive of sex-role stereotyping, adversarial sexual beliefs, and acceptance of interpersonal violence.

Feltey, Ainslie, and Geib (1991) found that men were more likely than women to justify rape. Men also indicated that environmental circumstances often predict what a woman wants (e.g., going to a man's home or apartment while dismissing a church function would be indicative of promiscuity). Young and Thiessen (1992) reported that responses on The Texas Rape Intensity Scale (TRIS), a scale that measures rape attitudes, indicated men have a significantly higher RMA than women.

Individuals identified as high in RMA have also been the focus of research. Korn (1993) conducted a study in which participants drawn from a national survey of college students completed a survey designed to assess students' attitudes toward sexual aggression. Based on their responses to the survey, participants were placed into four categories of sexual aggression tolerance: strongly oppose rape, somewhat oppose rape, somewhat support (tolerate) rape, and strongly support (tolerate) rape. Results revealed that 5.6% of men and 4.2% of women were found to strongly tolerate sexual aggression, 13% of men and 1.7% of women somewhat tolerated sexual aggression, about 41% of men and 11% of women somewhat opposed rape, and approximately 40% of men and 83% of women strongly

opposed rape. In general, men were more tolerant of sexual aggression than women; however, some women found sexual aggression tolerable. For those participants who were strongly tolerant or somewhat tolerant of sexual aggression, there was a positive correlation with the likelihood of having won a varsity letter in a sport in high school. For participants opposing or somewhat opposing rape, there was a positive correlation with high self-confidence in academic ability. They were also likely to be Caucasian women (Korn, 1993).

Gender differences in rape myth acceptance still exist following attempts to alter these attitudes. In an Introduction to Sociology class, 54 undergraduate students completed a survey before and after a series of rape lectures (Gilmartin, 1994). An RMA Scale and Burt's (1980) Sex-Role Stereotyping and Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence scales were completed by the students. Before the rape lectures began, women were found to hold less entrenched views of rape myth acceptance than men. Significant differences existed in men's and women's attitudes on five of the seven rape myth acceptance items, and women were more likely to dispute the myths. As a result of the rape lectures, women were more likely than men to change their existing support of rape myth acceptance. Gains were made among the men, but results indicate they had more difficulty than women distinguishing fact from fiction, and their ideas about rape and its survivors seemed to be more resistant to change. In sum, men were less willing to alter many of their attitudes about rape.

Although the results of most studies indicate that men have greater rape myth acceptance than women, Edmonds, Cahoon, and Shipman (1991) and Krahe (1988) reported men and women have similar levels of acceptance of rape myths. In the Edmonds et al. study, over 100 undergraduate students enrolled in an Introduction to Psychology class completed a survey assessing rape myth acceptance, sex-role stereotyping, adversarial sexual beliefs, sexual conservatism, and acceptance of interpersonal violence. No significant gender differences were found on any of the measures. Krahe (1988) found that after participants read a brief rape vignette and indicated whether the victim had any responsibility for the rape, participants with more support for rape myths emphasized the victim's responsibility for the attack. Men and women showed no significant differences in their responses. These findings notwithstanding, the preponderance of empirical evidence supports a gender difference in rape myth acceptance.

Gender Differences in Blame Attributions. Results from studies of attribution to victims of sexual assault further support the notion that men hold more rape-supportive attitudes than women. Dammann, Gerdes, and Heilig (1988) conducted a study of male and female students enrolled in the same university course. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of eight versions of a hypothetical newspaper article. Each version was accompanied by a picture of a rapist and a victim. Each story had the same central theme: the defendant grabbed the woman at

night when she was walking alone, he raped her in a stairwell, and a group of students heard the victim's screams. All stories contained this central theme, but the stories varied in detail involving the presence or absence of prior acquaintance and whether or not the two individuals had a class together. Also, included in the stories were pictures of the victim and defendant that varied in attractiveness. The victim or defendant was presented as either very attractive or less attractive. Results indicated gender differences in attribution of blame. Men blamed victims significantly more than women did. Although the probability of the victim's contribution to the crime was low in all circumstances and low in all conditions, men who read the acquaintance version rated the victim's contribution to the crime higher than men who read the alternative version and higher than women reading either version. For the unacquainted condition, the level of blame was generally very low; however, the attractive victim was held more responsible than the unattractive victim.

Other studies using rape vignettes have resulted in similar gender differences. Men consistently place more blame on the female victim than do women, and women consistently place more blame on the male perpetrator than do men (Bell, Kuriloff, & Lottes, 1994; Bridges, 1991; Feild, 1978; Foley, Evancic, Karnik, King, & Parks, 1995; Holcomb, Holcomb, Sondag, & Williams, 1991; Johnson & Jackson, Jr., 1988; Mori, Bernat, Glenn, Selle, & Zarate, 1995). In studies involving date rape scenarios or

acquaintance rape scenarios, male participants consistently blame the female victim to a greater extent than do female participants (Bell, Kuriloff, & Lottes, 1994; Johnson & Jackson, Jr., 1988; Margolin, Miller, & Moran, 1989). In general, men are more likely to minimize the seriousness of rape. Bridges (1991) found that men were more likely than women to hold the view that sexual assault in a steady relationship scenario is not actually rape, and that the victim finds pleasure in the experience. Compared to women, men tend to believe that the psychological damage to the victims of sexual assault is minimal.

College Athletes and Sexual Assault

College athletes across the country have been the focus of a considerable amount of attention due to reports of their involvement in felony acts such as rape and sexual assault (Hoffman, 1986; O'Sullivan, 1991; Warshaw, 1988). For example, Warshaw describes an instance in which three basketball players from the University of Minnesota were acquitted of 12 counts of sexual assault. They were accused of raping a woman in a hotel room after a game. Warshaw also reports that at West Virginia University, five basketball players were accused of raping a female student in a residence hall. Three of the players received a one-semester suspension while two were suspended for an entire season. At Duquesne University, four basketball players were charged with raping a woman in a dormitory. Three of the players were acquitted of all charges. The charges against the fourth player were dropped. The university suspended

all four players pending their trial. Following the trial, two were expelled from the university and two were suspended for half of the season.

In 1986 at the University of California-Berkeley, a woman was allegedly raped by four football players in her coed residence hall. She pressed charges, but the county did not prosecute due to insufficient evidence. The players' academic and athletic status were not affected. The university instructed the athletes to move out of the residence hall where they and the alleged rape victim lived, to undergo counseling, to apologize to the woman, and to perform 40 hours of community service. In general, penalties for athletes involved in sexual assaults have been minimal, and are rarely enforced (Warshaw, 1988).

Prevalence of Rape and Sexual Assault Experiences Among College Athletes. Male student-athletes are overrepresented as offenders of sexual assaults on college campuses. Maloy, Sherill, Bausell, Siegel, and Raymond (n.d.) conducted a nationwide survey to assess respondents' involvement and experiences with student crime, drug and alcohol use, and victimization and perpetrator experiences. A questionnaire was mailed to 6,000 undergraduates who were randomly chosen from a comprehensive list of college students by the American List Council of Princeton, New Jersey. About one third of the participants completed and returned the mail survey. Upon assessing the crime portion of the survey, participants' responses indicated that perpetrators of all crimes, including

sexual crimes, were much more likely to be male, and were significantly more likely to be members of fraternities and athletic teams.

There is evidence that male college athletes have been involved in documented sexual assaults more than male nonathletes. According to Hoffman (1986), between 1983 and 1986 a college athlete was reported for sexual assault on the average, once every 18 days. There were 61 incidents involving 88 athletes at 46 different schools during this period. In more than 90% of these cases, the victim knew her attacker or attackers. An FBI survey found that football and basketball players at NCAA colleges were reported to authorities for sexual assault 38% more often than male nonathletes (Hoffman, 1986). Research on campus rape shows that athletes and fraternity men are more likely than nonathletes to be sexually aggressive. An investigation of Division I colleges revealed that male athletes are reported to campus judicial affairs offices for sexual assault crimes more than the average male student (Crosset, Benedict, & McDonald, 1995). According to O'Sullivan (1991), 22 of the 24 documented cases of alleged gang rape by college students in the past 10 years have involved male student intercollegiate athletes and male students affiliated with a fraternity. Thirteen of the documented cases were perpetrated by fraternity men, four by groups of basketball players, four by groups of football players, one by lacrosse players, and only two by men unaffiliated with a formal organization.

The findings from surveys of female college students indicate that male athletes are overrepresented as perpetrators in women's victimization experiences. Frintner and Robinson (1993) conducted a study to determine the extent of sexual victimization among undergraduate women at a large university. Their results showed that 20.2% of the men involved in sexual assault or attempted sexual assault, 13.6% of the men involved in acts of sexual abuse, and 11% of the offenders involved in reported battery, illegal restraint, or intimidation were all members of sports teams or sports clubs. The percentage of athletes on campus during the semester the study was conducted was equivalent to less than 2% of the student body population.

Self-reports of Sexual Assault and Rape-Related Experiences.

Experiences with rape and attitudes about rape-related behaviors among college athletes were assessed by Jackson (1991). Male athletes constituted 69% and female athletes 31% of the respondents. Jackson examined the number of previous dating partners of each participant, and participants were administered a self-report questionnaire including variables concerning perpetration and victimization experiences and blame attributions for stranger and acquaintance rapes.

Information was collected shortly after the participants were exposed to a relationship violence and rape education program that included information on rape myths, prevalence figures, and prevention strategies. Results showed that among the men, 17% said they had held or kissed a woman against her

will and 16% admitted to sexually fondling a woman against her will. Additionally, 27% of men reported using guilt or threats to get a woman to have sex. Of men surveyed, 11% said they had physically assaulted a dating partner, and 4% admitted that they had physically forced a woman to have sexual intercourse against her will. Of the women surveyed, 21% said they had been kissed against their will and 24% stated they had been fondled without permission. Of the women surveyed, 14% stated that they gave in to having sex due to coercion, 10% indicated they had been physically assaulted while on a date, and none reported having been raped. The number of male athletes in this study who reported being a perpetrator of sexual assault is similar to the number of male nonathletes in other studies who reported being perpetrators of sexual assault (Warshaw, 1988). However, it is difficult to assess the validity of Jackson's (1991) findings because his study did not include a direct comparison with nonathletes from the same college. Jackson (1991) also did not elaborate on either the recruitment procedures for the sample or the participation rate.

Attitudinal Correlates

In a study conducted by Caron, Carter, and Brightman (1985), a total of 365 male undergraduates, including 269 varsity athletes, responded to a survey assessing attitudes toward women and sex role stereotyping. Of the athletes who participated, 106 were athletes from individual sports and 163 were participants in team sports. Team athletes exhibited higher masculinity and less

egalitarian attitudes toward women than did individual-sport athletes and nonathletes. Both individual and team athletes were more conservative, traditional, and stereotypical in their attitudes toward women than were nonathletes. These results are consistent with Sanday's (1990) contention that male organizations, including male intercollegiate athletics, tend to support and promote anti-female and rape-supportive environments. In general, athletes' attitudes in this survey supported high rape myth acceptance.

Koss and Gaines (1993) and others have also suggested that formal sports involvement is associated with sexual aggression (Frintner & Robinson, 1993; Hoffman, 1986; Maloy et.al, n.d.; O'Sullivan, 1991). According to Koss and Gaines, student-athletes who are participants in revenue-producing sports are more likely than other athletes and nonathletes to hold attitudes supportive of sexual aggression.

Rape myth acceptance is also associated with sex-role stereotyping (Burt, 1980). According to Houseworth, Peplow, and Thirer (1989), participation in athletics and attitudes toward women have been found to be related. Specifically, athletes hold more conservative and less egalitarian attitudes toward women than nonathletes. Athletes in both contact (e.g., football and wrestling) and noncontact (e.g., track) sports hold more conservative, traditional views toward women than nonathletes. Furthermore, men who subscribe to traditional sex roles and male sexual dominance are more likely than other men to engage in

verbal sexual coercion, sexual assault, and rape (Berkowitz, 1992; Muehlenhard & Falcon, 1990; O'Sullivan, 1991), and there is evidence that athletes are more likely to endorse these beliefs than nonathletes (Houseworth, Peplow, & Thirer, 1989).

Adding to the body of evidence indicating college male athletes have higher rape myth acceptance than male nonathletes is research conducted by Parrot, Cummings, Marchell, and Hofher (1994). In 1990, the Cornell University varsity football team and the members of the rowing team participated in a rape awareness program. Prior to the program, members of both teams were asked to anonymously respond to these incomplete statements, "Someone is giving me a sexual come-on when..." and "I feel I am owed sex when..." Sixty-four percent of the rowing team and 55% of the football team stated that physical touching and kissing were viewed as a come-on to sexual intercourse. Overall, 28% of the rowing team and 30% of the football players responded inappropriately regarding their sense of sexual entitlement. This group indicated they were entitled to sex due to circumstances such as prior sexual contact and if they spent money on a date.

Perhaps athletes are part of a unique culture that accepts sexual violence and aggression. According to Curry (1991), talk fragments collected over a 9-month period in college sports teams' locker rooms indicate that sex and aggression were familiar and typical themes in men's talk, and no athlete ever publicly challenged the dominant sexism of the locker room.

Differential association theory suggests that men who are fraternity members and/or members of a sports team may be perpetrators in group assaults because sexual violence behavior is learned within these groups and passed down among members like a tradition (Defleur & Quinney, 1966).

Contribution of the Current Study

The current study contributes to the existing literature on rape myth acceptance in several ways. Limited research has focused on the attitudes of male college athletes. In fact, there has been little research done on the association between athletic status and rape myth acceptance. A few studies have focused on attitudes that have been found to correlate highly with rape myth acceptance. These attitudes include masculinity, egalitarian attitudes, acceptance of interpersonal violence, and sex-role stereotyping (Burt, 1980). As previously stated, acceptance of interpersonal violence and aggression is highly correlated with rape myth acceptance. And because athletes have been associated with sexual assaults more often than the typical male college student, perhaps athletes hold more rape supportive attitudes.

It is important to assess male college athletes' attitudes toward rape myths because they have indicated an acceptance of many of the attitudes associated with rape myth acceptance, they are reported to be offenders and perpetrators more often than other male college students, and they are overrepresented in documented cases of sexual assault. Existing research supports

the notion that men hold more rape supportive attitudes than do women, and male athletes, in general, tend to support attitudes supportive of rape myth acceptance more than female athletes, female college students, and male nonathletes.

The current study focuses on rape myth acceptance of both male and female student-athletes and male and female nonathletes at a mid-sized midwestern university. My study is similar to previous studies in that it examined gender differences in rape myth acceptance among college students. However, my study also included athletic status as a variable of interest. Fritner and Robinson (1993) suggest that limited research has focused on the association between athletic status and sexual violence. Their study adds to the body of literature suggesting an association, but it is clear that additional research on the possible association between athletic status and sexual violence is needed.

Rape myth acceptance was assessed by the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS) developed by Payne (1993). The scale measures rape myth attitudes and perceptions; that is, the tendency to hold beliefs supporting rape. It is predicted that overall, men will have more supportive attitudes about rape myth acceptance. Athletes will have higher RMA scores than nonathletes. An interaction effect is predicted in that male athletes in particular will have higher RMA scores than male nonathletes, female athletes, and female nonathletes.

CHAPTER II

Method

Participants

A total of 287 undergraduate and graduate students at a midsized midwestern university participated in the study. The average age for participants was 19.86 (SD=2.57). Participants included students in lower division general education courses (i.e., psychology, history, and algebra); female student members of Sigma Kappa sorority; and intercollegiate student-athletes representing football, men's and women's track, softball, soccer, swimming, and volleyball. The participants included 35 male nonathletes, 124 female nonathletes, 77 male athletes, and 51 female athletes. Each of the participants completed the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS) developed by Payne (1993) and a self-constructed demographics questionnaire.

Measures

Rape Myth Acceptance Scale. The RMAS has 45 items, 5 of which are distractor items, and it takes 10-15 minutes to complete. The overall Cronbach alpha of the RMAS is more than adequate at .93. The seven subscales on the RMAS include the following: Victim Precipitation (she deserved it/agreed to it), It Wasn't Really Rape (concerns physically fighting back, weapons, and verbal protests), He Didn't Mean To/Couldn't Help It (the belief that the man was justified in his behavior), She Really Wanted It/Enjoyed It (implies women enjoy sexual force), Rape Is No Big Deal (implies rape is not a problem in society),

Rape Is A Deviant Event (implies rape occurs on the bad side of town, involves the woman wearing skimpy clothing), and She Lied (denies the reality of rape). Cronbach alphas of the subscales range from .74 to .84 (Payne, 1993, p. 63). The 40 items on the RMA consist of validated rape myth statements relating to one of the 7 types of specific rape myths. Participants were asked to rate each statement on a 1-7 Likert-type scale with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree. Statements endorsed by participants had higher scores, which indicated greater RMA. Scores on all 40 items were averaged for a total score, and items corresponding to subscales were averaged for subscale scores. The five distractor items did not contribute to the overall RMA score.

Demographic Items. Demographic items were included to provide information regarding the participants' gender, age, class standing, athletic status and specific intercollegiate team, if any. Two distractor items were added that dealt with the participant's involvement in student organizations.

There was a statement on the questionnaire addressed to the participants that included an overview of the study, approximate completion time (10-15 minutes), the ensurance of anonymity, the possibility of items being disturbing and where to seek help if the content was found to be disturbing, and the right to withdraw from the study without penalty.

Procedure

With the permission of their instructor, the general

education students were given the questionnaire during one of their scheduled class periods. The participants from Sigma Kappa sorority completed the questionnaire during one of their weekly meetings. Permission from one of the executive officers of Sigma Kappa sorority was obtained, and she distributed the questionnaires at the meeting. Permission was obtained and arrangements were made with the intercollegiate athletic coaches to give the questionnaire to their athletes. Athletes completed the questionnaire before one of their daily scheduled practices. A total of 308 questionnaires were distributed and 287 were completed. Twenty-one questionnaires were rejected due to incomplete items or items with multiple responses.

Design and Analysis

A two-factor natural groups design was used with a 2 (gender) X 2 (athletic status) analysis of variance (ANOVA). Specifically, a series of two-factor analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used to examine the influence of gender and athletic status on overall RMA scores as well as on scores on the seven subscales. Thus, a total of 8 analyses were conducted.

CHAPTER III

Results

An analysis of variance and an alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests. The analysis of variance conducted on total RMA scores indicated there was no significant interaction for gender and athletic status. There was a significant difference for both gender and athletic status. Men ($\bar{M} = 2.88732$, $SD = 0.82777$) showed higher RMA than women ($\bar{M} = 2.02816$, $SD = 0.64419$); $F(1, 283) = 107.39$. Athletes ($\bar{M} = 2.62164$, $SD = 0.84520$) had higher RMA than nonathletes ($\bar{M} = 2.15639$, $SD = 0.76598$); $F(1, 283) = 32.68$ (see Table 1).

Results for five of the seven subscales were identical to the total RMA scale, and they were consistent in that there was no interaction effect between gender and athletic status, men scored higher than women, and athletes scored higher than nonathletes. For the It Wasn't Really Rape subscale, $\bar{M} = 1.993$ for men ($SD = 0.826$) and $\bar{M} = 1.354$ for women ($SD = 0.569$) as $F(1, 283) = 64.34$. For athletes, $\bar{M} = 1.805$ ($SD = 0.852$), and for nonathletes, $\bar{M} = 1.442$ ($SD = 0.607$); $F(1, 283) = 21.55$ (see Table 2). For the She Really Wanted It/Enjoyed It subscale, $\bar{M} = 2.650$ for men ($SD = 1.110$) and $\bar{M} = 1.794$ for women ($SD = 0.974$); $F(1, 283) = 50.72$. For athletes, $\bar{M} = 2.439$ ($SD = 1.158$), and for nonathletes, $\bar{M} = 1.878$ ($SD = 1.003$); $F(1, 283) = 22.59$ (see Table 3). For the She Lied subscale, $\bar{M} = 4.046$ for men ($SD = 1.130$) and $\bar{M} = 2.733$ for women ($SD = 1.033$); $F(1, 283) = 108.45$. For athletes, $\bar{M} = 3.539$ ($SD = 1.271$) and for nonathletes,

$M = 3.011$ ($SD = 1.181$); $F(1, 283) = 18.17$ (see Table 4). For the Rape Is No Big Deal subscale, $M = 2.225$ for men ($SD = 1.027$) and $M = 1.336$ for women ($SD = 0.463$); $F(1, 283) = 107.18$. For athletes, $M = 1.909$ ($SD = 0.973$) and for nonathletes, $M = 1.501$ ($SD = 0.695$); $F(1, 283) = 23.42$ (see Table 5). For the Rape Is A Deviant Event subscale, $M = 2.1917$ for men ($SD = 0.8814$) and $M = 1.5991$ ($SD = 0.6268$); $F(1, 283) = 45.70$. For athletes, $M = 1.9930$ ($SD = 0.8692$) and for nonathletes, $M = 1.7001$ ($SD = 0.6963$); $F(1, 283) = 11.58$ (see Table 6).

Two subscales yielded different results. For the Victim Precipitation subscale, there was no significant interaction effect, no significant gender difference, and no significant difference due to athletic status (see Table 7). For the He Didn't Mean To/Couldn't Help It subscale, there was a significant interaction effect. For athletes, gender was not a factor; for nonathletes, gender was a factor. Male nonathletes had significantly higher scores than female nonathletes. For this subscale, the influence of gender on RMA scores depends on athletic status. Men ($M = 3.861$, $SD = 1.198$) had significantly higher scores than women ($M = 3.180$, $SD = 1.256$); $F(1, 282) = 21.54$. There was also a significant difference due to athletic status as athletes ($M = 3.619$, $SD = 1.172$) had higher scores than nonathletes ($M = 3.308$, $SD = 1.341$); $F(1, 282) = 4.68$ (see Table 8).

CHAPTER IV

Discussion

Regarding gender, my findings modeled patterns from previous research. Past studies have indicated that men have higher rape myth acceptance than women (e.g., Burt, 1980; Jenkins & Dambrot, 1987; Lanis & Covell, 1995; Mori et. al, 1995). Similar to past findings, men in my study had significantly higher rape myth acceptance on the total RMA score as well as on each individual subtest of Payne's RMA scale, with the exception of *Victim Precipitation*. Thus, men in my study rated rape myths as more acceptable than did women, and they were more likely to accept attitudes indicative of rape-supportive beliefs.

Regarding athletic status, athletes as a group had higher scores on total RMA and on all subscales except for *Victim Precipitation*. These results indicate that overall, athletes are more likely than nonathletes to believe in rape-supporting beliefs and attitudes. On the subscale *He Didn't Mean To/Couldn't Help It*, which includes statements supportive of the notion that the man was justified in his behavior, an interaction was detected between athletic status and gender. For athletes, gender was not a factor, whereas for nonathletes, men scored higher than women.

Overall, my findings support the contention that men have higher rape myth acceptance than women. Contradictory to expectations however, male athletes did not emerge as the group with the highest RMA scores.

In my study, athletes as a group had higher RMA than nonathletes as a group. Interaction effects between gender and athletic status were expected, but surprisingly, they did not occur. The finding that female athletes had significantly higher RMA scores than female nonathletes is particularly intriguing. This association should be investigated further. It seems that male and female athletes have something in common. Perhaps there are attitudes specific to the culture of athletes. Sanday (1990) and Caron, Carter, and Brightman (1985) found that male intercollegiate athletes tended to support and promote anti-female and rape-supportive environments. Frintner and Robinson (1993), Koss and Gaines and O'Sullivan (1991) suggest formal sports involvement is associated with sexual aggression. Burt (1980) found support of sexual aggression to be correlated with rape myth acceptance. Curry (1991) found that in talk fragments collected over a 9-month period in male college sports teams' locker rooms, sex and aggression were familiar themes. Perhaps athletes are part of a special culture that accepts attitudes, like aggression and sexual violence, that correlate with rape myth acceptance. Perhaps similar themes exist in female athletes' locker rooms, but no study has investigated this.

DeFleur and Quinney (1966) believe that fraternity members and male athletes learn sexual violence behavior in these groups and that these attitudes are passed down like a tradition. But these studies focus on male athletes rather than female athletes.

The current findings suggest the importance of examining in more detail the attitudes of female athletes. Perhaps athletes as a group hold similar attitudes and views regarding aggression and rape myth acceptance. Because there is no definitive explanation for why athletes have higher RMA, it would be beneficial for additional research to explore this issue.

This study assessed participants' attitudes and acceptance of rape myths. Additional research should investigate if rape myth acceptance is predictable of actual behavior. The results of this study suggest that rape myth acceptance, by association, appears linked to the tolerance and acceptance of sexual assault. Perhaps another study could examine participants' rape myth acceptance and compare it to their personal involvement with actual assault.

The generalizability of these findings is somewhat limited because participants were obtained from only one university and only one geographical location. Results are also limited because male athletes were obtained from only two intercollegiate athletic teams (i.e., football and track). Also, the number of male nonathletes in this study was relatively small compared to the numbers in the other groups.

A potential confound in the study involves self-report reliability. Although participants appeared to carefully examine questions and use sufficient time to complete the questionnaire, there is no guarantee they answered questions in a way that would depict their true attitudes.

According to Fisher (1986), participants with high RMA are less likely to believe a rape occurred even when the scenario meets the legal criteria for rape. Perhaps efforts in schools can help to prevent widespread endorsements of rape myths. Educational seminars about rape and the definition of rape should be offered to increase awareness about rape and rape-related behaviors. Perhaps educational programs would increase rape myth identification so that fewer rape myths would be accepted or tolerated. In this study, RMA scores appear low overall as most scores are clustered between a 2 and 3 on a 7-point scale. However, anything over a score of 1 indicates a degree of rape myth acceptance. Educational programs should increase efforts to decrease any acceptance of rape myths.

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TABLE 1

Mean Scores for Total Rape Myth Acceptance

<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>F</u>
Men	112	2.88732	0.82777	107.39*
Women	174	2.02816	0.64419	

Athletic Status

Athletes	128	2.62164	0.84520	32.68*
Nonathletes	158	2.15639	0.76598	

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

No significant interaction for athletic status and gender

Mean Scores for It Wasn't Really Rape

<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>F</u>
Men	112	1.993	0.826	64.34*
Women	174	1.354	0.569	

Athletic Status

Athletes	128	1.805	0.852	21.55*
Nonathletes	158	1.442	0.607	

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

No significant interaction for athletic status and gender

TABLE 3

Mean Scores for She Really Wanted It/Enjoyed It

<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>F</u>
Men	112	2.650	1.110	50.72*
Women	174	1.794	0.974	

Athletic Status

Athletes	128	2.439	1.158	22.59*
Nonathletes	158	1.878	1.003	

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

No significant interaction for athletic status and gender

TABLE 4

Mean Scores for She Lied

<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>F</u>
Men	112	4.046	1.130	108.45*
Women	174	2.733	1.033	

Athletic Status

Athletes	128	3.539	1.271	18.17*
Nonathletes	158	3.011	1.181	

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

No significant interaction for athletic status and gender

TABLE 5

Mean Scores for Rape is No Big Deal

<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>F</u>
Men	112	2.225	1.027	107.18*
Women	174	1.336	0.463	

Athletic Status

Athletes	128	1.909	0.973	23.42*
Nonathletes	158	1.501	0.695	

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

No significant interaction for athletic status and gender

Mean Scores for Rape is a Deviant Event

<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>F</u>
Men	112	2.1917	0.8814	45.70*
Women	174	1.5991	0.6268	

Athletic Status

Athletes	128	1.9930	0.8692	11.58*
Nonathletes	158	1.7001	0.6963	

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

No significant interaction for athletic status and gender

Mean Scores for Victim Precipitation

<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>F</u>
Men	112	3.27045	1.19641	0.64
Women	174	2.90292	3.799798	

<u>Athletic Status</u>				
Athletes	128	3.945918	4.43020	1.25
Nonathletes	158	2.33820	1.08346	

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

No significant gender difference

No significant difference due to athletic status

No significant interaction for athletic status and gender

TABLE 8

Mean Scores for He Didn't Mean To/Couldn't Help It

<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>F</u>
Men	112	3.861	1.198	21.54*
Women	174	3.180	1.256	
<hr/>				
<u>Athletic Status</u>				
Athletes	128	3.619	1.172	4.68*
Nonathletes	158	3.308	1.341	

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

A significant interaction for athletic status and gender

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

The following evaluation project complements a thesis requirement for a graduate student in the School Psychology Specialist program at Eastern Illinois University. The project is examining college students' beliefs and attitudes about rape and rape-related behaviors. The data on the questionnaire contains 2 sections: Part A and Part B. Part A consists of demographic information about you. Part B contains statements relating to topics surrounding issues of gender, rape-related issues and sexual relationships.

Responses on the questionnaire are anonymous, and cannot be connected to your identity. Your participation is completely voluntary - you are free to quit responding if you feel uncomfortable at any point during your participation.

If any content on this questionnaire is disturbing to you, you may consider contacting the Eastern Illinois University Counseling Center at 581-3413. Office hours are from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

If you have any questions about this evaluation project, you may contact the following persons:

Josie Moore, Graduate Student in School Psychology 345-4692

Dr. William Addison, Professor in Psychology 581-6611

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, and for taking part in this evaluation project. The following questionnaire contains two sections: Part A and Part B. Part A consists of demographic information about you. Part B contains statements relating to topics surrounding issues of gender and sexual relationships, and it will take approximately ten minutes to complete. This section focuses almost exclusively on your opinion - there are no "right" or "wrong" answers in this section.

As a reminder, all of your responses are completely anonymous. There is no way of connecting your identity with your responses. Your participation is completely voluntary - you are free to quit responding if you feel uncomfortable at any point during your participation. However, your responses are of great value; please respond frankly and as completely as possible.

As previously stated, if you find any content on this questionnaire disturbing, you may consider contacting the Eastern Illinois University Counseling Center at 581-3413. Office hours are from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

PART A

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Gender:

_____ Male

_____ Female

2. Class Standing:

_____ Freshman _____ Sophomore _____ Junior _____ Senior _____ Graduate Student

3. Age:

_____ years

4. Are you a member of an intercollegiate athletic team?

_____ Yes

_____ No

5. What sport?

6. Are you a member of a social fraternity or sorority?

_____ Yes

_____ No

7. Are you a member of a Recognized Student Organization on campus?

_____ Yes

_____ No

PART B

OPINION QUESTIONS

This part of the survey concerns issues of gender and sexual relationships. This section focuses on your opinion - there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. For each statement, please circle the number that best corresponds to your opinion, where 1 equals "strongly disagree," and 7 equals "strongly agree."

	strongly disagree				neutral				strongly agree	
1. If a woman is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of control.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
2. Although most women wouldn't admit it, they generally find being physically forced into sex a real "turn-on."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
3. When men rape, it is because of their strong desire for sex.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
4. If a woman is willing to "make out" with a guy, then it's no big deal if he goes a little further and has sex.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
5. Women who are caught having an illicit affair sometimes claim that it was rape.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
6. Newspapers should not release the name of a rape victim to the public.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
7. Many so-called rape victims are actually women who had sex and "changed their minds" afterwards.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
8. Many women secretly desire to be raped.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
9. Rape mainly occurs on the "bad" side of town.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
10. Usually, it is only women who do things like hang out in bars and sleep around that are raped.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
11. Most rapists are not caught by the police.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
12. If a woman doesn't physically fight back, you can't really say that it was rape.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
13. Men from nice middle-class homes almost never rape.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
14. Rape isn't as big a problem as some feminists would like people to think.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			

15. When women go around wearing low-cut tops or short skirts, they're just asking for trouble.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at men.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. A rape probably didn't happen if the woman has no bruises or marks.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Many women find being forced to have sex very arousing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. If a woman goes home with a man she doesn't know, it is her own fault if she is raped.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Rapists are usually sexually frustrated individuals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. All women should have access to self-defense classes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. It is usually only women who dress suggestively that are raped.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. Some women prefer to have sex forced on them so they don't have to feel guilty about it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. If the rapist doesn't have a weapon, you really can't call it rape.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. When a woman is a sexual tease, eventually she is going to get into trouble.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. Being raped isn't as bad as being mugged and beaten.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. Rape is unlikely to happen in the woman's own familiar neighborhood.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. In reality, women are almost never raped by their boyfriends.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. Women tend to exaggerate how much rape affects them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. When a man is very sexually aroused, he may not even realize that the woman is resisting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 31. A lot of women lead a man on and then they cry rape. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 32. It is preferable that a female police officer conduct the questioning when a woman reports a rape. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 33. A lot of times, women who claim they were raped just have emotional problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 34. If a woman doesn't physically resist sex - even when protesting verbally - it really can't be considered rape. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 35. Rape almost never happens in the woman's own home. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 36. A woman who "teases" men deserves anything that might happen. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 37. When women are raped, it's often because the way they said "no" was ambiguous. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 38. If a woman isn't a virgin, then it shouldn't be a big deal if her date forces her to have sex. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 39. Men don't usually intend to force sex on a woman, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 40. This society should devote more effort to preventing rape. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 41. A woman who dresses in skimpy clothes should not be surprised if a man tries to force her to have sex. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 42. Rape happens when a man's sex drive gets out of control. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 43. A woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on the first date is implying that she wants to have sex. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 44. Many women actually enjoy sex after the guy uses a little force. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 45. If a woman claims to have been raped but has no bruises or scrapes, she probably shouldn't be taken too seriously. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |