May 2019

Conformity Among College Students: The Effect of Gender on Sexually Violent Beliefs

Hanna Christine Klecka
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

CONFORMITY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS: THE EFFECT OF GENDER ON SEXUALLY VIOLENT BELIEFS

by

Hanna Klecka

A Thesis Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in Communication

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

May 2019

ABSTRACT

CONFORMITY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS: THE EFFECT OF GENDER ON SEXUALLY VIOLENT BELIEFS

by

Hanna Klecka

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2019
Under the Supervision of Professor Erin Ruppel

Sexual violence continues to be a global issue that yields startling statistics of victimhood among collegiate populations. This study explores relationships between gender, social influence, conformity, and gender role orientation, in addition to the impact these factors have on perceptions of sexual violence. Undergraduate students ($N = 210$) evaluated a vignette detailing a case of possible sexual assault after reading about decisions indicating victim blaming made by previous groups of students. The results showed one's predisposition to conform and endorse traditional gender roles predicted the likelihood to victim blame and endorse rape myths. Additionally, results revealed that the gender of an individual and a majority group influenced propensity to victim blame. Finally, a surprising finding showed that a male in a female majority group who was a low conformist and less traditional became the most likely to victim blame. An implication from these findings is that groups hold significant power to influence individuals' decisions, which is problematic when groups make inaccurate judgments and incorrect decisions. A gap exists between understanding theoretical concepts and applications of sexual violence. Relevant limitations and future directions that require further exploration are discussed so that effective preventative efforts can be implemented on college campuses.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are several people I would like to thank for their contributions to this project. First, thank you to my advisor, Dr. Erin Ruppel, who consistently gave insightful and encouraging feedback throughout the entire process. Without her support and expertise, this thesis would not be what it is today. I am incredibly grateful for the time she gave to me from the very beginning. I would also like to extend my thanks to my committee members, Dr. Mike Allen and Dr. Ali Gattoni, for their constructive comments. They challenged me to examine my arguments, analyze my methodology, and consider my results in ways I had not considered. My thesis benefitted significantly from their involvement.

I would also like to thank my friends and family for their enduring love, support, and confidence. I appreciate all of you who listened patiently to my many rants, served as sounding boards for my theories, and contributed your own viewpoints to this issue that has consumed my mind. Those conversations sparked ideas and motivated me to remain dedicated to my work. I feel fortunate to have had the love and support from so many wonderful people. This brief paragraph does not come close to accurately expressing my sincere gratitude. To do so fully, I would need to write many more pages. Just know that from the bottom of my heart, I love you all and thank you.

I. INTRODUCTION

Recently in U.S. society, sexual violence has become a mainstream topic. Sexual aggressors, who span industries, ages, and socioeconomic classes, are grappling with the ramifications of being accused of sexual misconduct (Bennett, 2017). The *Me Too* movement has redirected attention to the topic of sexual violence from the private to the public sphere, creating a "tsunami" filled with victims' stories, shared victimhood support, accusations of perpetrators, and general discussion related to the issue of sexual violence and violence against women (Bennett, 2017, para. 6). The *Me Too* hashtag itself has created an "umbrella for solidarity," which has led to the revelation of millions of victims' stories from around the world (Zacharek, Dockterman, & Edwards, 2017, para. 7). Further, this discourse has prompted societal evaluation of this issue at large, begging a central question: What are the underlying origins that have created and instilled such widespread sexual violence? This paper investigates this topic in relation to college students, drawing connections between social constructions (traditional normative gender roles), human group processes (conformity and social influence), and individuals' multiple social identities (gender, religion, group affiliation, etc.).

Sexual Violence in Colleges

Compared to the population at large, college women are at higher risk for experiencing sexual assault (Daigle, Fisher, & Cullen, 2008; Douglas & Collins, 1997; Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000). Studies show that between one in three and one in four college women will be sexually assaulted during their college careers (Cantor et al., 2015; Fisher et al., 2000). This violence leads to serious negative health consequences for victims. Researchers found that victims of sexual violence had higher blood pressure, poorer mental health (i.e., higher odds of having severe depression symptoms), and poorer sleep (Thurston, Chang, Matthews, Känee, &

Koenen, 2018). The focus of prevention efforts and education programs often centers on what potential victims should do to avoid such violence (Bedera & Nordmeyer, 2015), and other studies show that the efforts to educate the collegiate population about sexual violence are often ineffective if these efforts fail to appropriately target potential bystanders or aggressors (Foubert, Newberry, & Tatum, 2007). Even after completing educational programs, many students continue to have weak or misguided understandings of definitions of sexual assault, rape, etc. (Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner, 2003). Understanding the issue of sexual violence in college can contribute to better educational programs that not only improve victim awareness of the issue but also more accurately target and educate aggressors and bystanders (Foubert et al., 2007).

Given the previous literature, it is important to study the collegiate context in which this sexual violence takes place for several reasons. The first reason is that simply being on a college campus puts women at higher risk of sexual assault, so taking steps to better understand the factors that contribute to this increased risk is imperative to creating safer environments for women seeking higher education. A second reason is that, as evidenced by the *Me Too* movement, sexual violence proliferates into general society when college students transition into the workforce and occupational contexts. In other words, sexually violent views do not deteriorate upon an aggressor's graduation from a university. Therefore, identifying environments, groups, and processes through which sexually violent ideas are perpetuated at the collegiate level could lead to more effective preventative efforts, potentially having an impact that is twofold: safer universities and a safer society.

A wealth of literature exists that demonstrates that collegiate climates are rife with sexual violence among college students. Many studies focus on specific groups that could be prone to violent attitudes and behaviors. Murnen and Kohlman's meta-analytic review (2007) analyzes

research about male college athletes (Gage, 2008) and college fraternity members (Seabrook, Ward, & Giaccardi, 2016), discovering that sexual aggression is much more common among these groups due to the endurance of hypermasculine ideals that often manifest in these insular, all-male environments. Such environments often encourage and pressure members of groups to act according to a set of standards, and the standards sustain negative views towards women. Carroll's dissertation (2009) analyzes sexual violence in relation to moral disengagement of fraternity members, using a vignette to depict sexual assault to analyze members' attitudes toward the victim and perpetrator. Other studies give focus to how one's alignment with traditional gender norms and roles (Murnen, Wright, & Kaluzny, 2002) and the belief in rape myths (Check & Malamuth, 1983) leads to sexually violent attitudes. Neurological and behavioral studies on conformity show that a member is likely to conform to group values if there is potential to receive in-group rewards (Stallen, Smidts, & Sanfey, 2013). When considering one of the aforementioned collegiate groups, rewards could include in-group acceptance, increased popularity, and positive self-concept. Asch found that group influence increases conformity among short-term groups with no relational history (1955), and Hoggs and Hains (1998) found that symptoms associated with groupthink were more common when members were socially attracted to and identified with a group. These studies lend support to the notion that some college students who are seeking to fit into a group with which they identify might be prone to conform to sexually violent values upheld by that group, which can lead to the maintenance of sexually violent attitudes and behavior.

While much of the literature supports the notion that group affiliation has an impact on individual members' sexually violent attitudes, some have found an individual's prior sexual deviation is a larger contributor to sexual aggression than group affiliation is (Jackson, Gilliland,

& Veneziano, 2006). The current study seeks to verify whether group impacts sexual aggression among college students. This study extends the topic by further analyzing how conformity contributes to the spread of sexually violent attitudes and behaviors among certain groups. Carroll's (2009) vignette of sexual violence generated conclusions related to rape-supportive attitudes, but the focus of the study was to compare fraternity and non-fraternity men. McCreary's (2012) vignette of hazing similarly drew conclusions about social influence among fraternity and non-fraternity men. This study harnesses similar measures to make determinations about sexual violence, conformity, and social influence to generate conclusions about a sample consisting of a wide range of student identities beyond the Greek/non-Greek dualistic approach that is consistently used across the literature. Achieving this comprehensive understanding of the interaction between sexual violence, students' gendered expectations and beliefs, and social influence will contribute significantly to the discipline of communication, while also offering collegiate administration guidance when curating and adapting educational programming about sexual violence to their campus populations.

Objectives

The current study will focus on the perspectives and behaviors of college students related to sexual violence and victim blaming. This study has several key objectives: 1) determine whether an individual who is prone to conformity is also prone to victim-blaming along with a group, 2) verify whether individuals who believe in traditional gender roles are more likely to victim-blame and believe in rape myths, 3) learn more about the influence gender has on conformity, and 4) discover if there are significant correlations between aspects of students' identities other than gender (e.g., age, religious affiliation, etc.) and one's propensity to victim-blame.

To achieve these objectives, relevant literature is reviewed investigating sexual violence, contextual factors of a college campus, cultural and societal factors related to traditional gender norms, and group and individual processes related to social influence. After a synthesis of the literature, the method and data collection will be discussed. Next, the results will be disclosed and examined. Following the results is a conclusion that comprises theoretical applications, practical implications for higher education institutions (HEIs), limitations, and future directions that require further exploration.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review frames the issue of sexual violence at large, defining terms and discussing relevant empirical research findings. Further, this review contextualizes the issue by discussing factors related to national, legal, and collegiate policies and programs that pertain to sexual violence. The review then addresses cultural and societal factors, establishing a theoretical framework based on historic and current scholarship. Finally, the review extends the theoretical framework to discuss group-level factors related to social influence at the individual level. At the conclusion of the literature review, research questions and hypotheses are presented. The intention of this study is to gain greater insight into the factors that contribute to sexual violence, particularly at the individual and group levels, so that scholars and administrators at HEIs can better-educate and protect their students at an organizational level.

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is a widespread, international issue, particularly against women. According to the Center for Disease Control, "Sexual violence is defined as any sexual act that is committed or attempted by another person without the consent of the victim or against someone who is unable to consent or refuse" (Basile, Smith, Breiding, Black, & Mahendra, 2014, p. 11).

This lack of consent could be due to a victim's disability, age, unconscious state, or being intoxicated by use of alcohol or drugs, either voluntarily or involuntarily (Basile et al., 2014, p. 11). Basile and colleagues note that the following acts are types of sexual violence: completed or attempted forced penetration of a victim, completed or attempted alcohol/drug-facilitated penetration of a victim, completed or attempted forced acts in which a victim is made to penetrate a perpetrator or someone else, completed or attempted alcohol/drug-facilitated acts in which a victim is made to penetrate a perpetrator or someone else, non-physically forced penetration which occurs after a person is pressured verbally or through intimidation or misuse of authority to consent or acquiesce, unwanted sexual contact, and non-contact unwanted sexual experiences (2014).

Prevalence of sexual violence. Sexual violence is an issue on college campuses, where women are at high risk of being victimized. In recent years, rates of reported incidents of sexual violence have increased on college campuses. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in 2015, there were 8,000 incidents of sexual offenses (29% of crimes) on campus that were reported to police and security agencies. Further, between 2001 and 2015, the number of reported forcible sexual offenses on campus rose from 2,200 to 8,000, which is a 262% increase (NCES, 2018). Some scholars continue to debate whether this dramatic increase is a consequence of an increase in sexual violence or whether more awareness has led to more victims coming forward to report. Regardless, Cantor et al. (2017) still found that fewer than 28% of incidents involving sexual violence were reported to an organization or agency (e.g., law enforcement, institution's Title IX office, campus security). Notably, this study spanned 27 HEIs and consisted of 779,170 students. Scholars and agencies alike contend that sexual violence is significantly underreported (Cantor et al., 2017; WHO, 2003). The fact that reports of sexual

violence have recently more than doubled, yet victims report the occurrence of sexual violence less than one-third of the time, is troubling.

Sexual victimization. Rates of sexual assault victimization are reportedly highest among specific populations of students, including undergraduate females and those identifying as transgender, genderqueer, non-conforming, or questioning (Cantor et al., 2017). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in the general population, the vast majority of victims are female and aggressors are male, and in most cases, the victim and aggressor know one another (2003). Given that between one in three and one in four college women are sexually assaulted during their college careers (Fisher et al., 2000), this study will focus on violence against college women. However, it is also important to recognize that sexual violence is not restricted to gender binaries (e.g., men against women). Rather, sexual violence is an "aggressive act motivated by power and control" (WHO, 2003, p. 9), and findings from a recent poll revealed that the race, ethnicity, social class, study habits, and religious practices of victims did not serve as predictors for aggressors' actions against them ("Washington Post," 2015). This means that both the aggressor and victim can have any demographic identity (gender, sexual orientation, race, age, etc.) so long as he or she as the aggressor can exert power over the victim.

Given the widespread nature of sexual violence, some question why victims do not report or why they report at a much later time. The fact that victims often do not report to authorities could relate to a multitude of factors, including victims' lack of understanding of what constitutes sexual violence (Fisher et al., 2003; Gavey, 2005); fear associated with not being believed and victim blaming (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010); shame and embarrassment (Cantor et al., 2017); concern for consequences the aggressor might face ("Washington Post," 2015); psychological issues, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, and negative

self-image (Brousseau, Bergeron, Hébert, & McDuff, 2010); and unclear institutional policies (Dick, 2015), among other causes. Cantor et al. (2017) found that more than 50% of victims of incidents considered to be the most serious (e.g., forced penetration) do not report because they do not believe the incident requires reporting. Relatedly, Gavey (2015) found that even when women had an experience that met the legal definition of rape, they still often did not identify the incident as rape, or themselves as rape victims. Further, some victims fear that if they report the incident, authorities will not believe them and they will be accused of false reporting. Lisak, Gardinier, Nicksa, and Cote (2010) found that after an analysis of a 10-year period and 136 cases reported to a large university, 5.9% of the cases were determined to be false allegations, which fits in the context of previous research that contends 2-10% of sexual assault allegations are false. A plethora of scholars assert that non-supportive reactions at the individual, group, organizational, and societal levels often discourage victims of sexual violence from coming forward (Armstrong, Hamilton, & Sweney, 2006; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). Therefore, statistics likely underestimate the prevalence of sexual violence on campus because many incidents go unreported.

Sexual aggression. A long-standing myth exists that perpetrators committing sexually violent acts are strangers lurking in the dark, waiting to assault victims; however, more often than not, victims know the attackers. According to the Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation poll, which surveyed a random sample of 1,053 recent graduates of 4-year institutions, 22% of the victims knew their attacker very well, 25% knew their attacker fairly well, 23% knew their attacker not too well, and 28% did not know their attacker at all (2015). This survey demonstrates that to varying degrees, victims knew their attacker 72% of the time. Longstanding (Check & Malamuth, 1983; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987) and more recent

(Flezzani & Benshoft, 2003; Fisher et al., 2000) studies support this notion that sexual aggression, which is defined as non-stranger sexual assault, is a prevalent phenomenon across campuses. Further, some studies indicate that undergraduate students hold incorrect beliefs of what types of situations constitute sexual assault ("Washington Post," 2015). Check and Malamuth (1983) found that many undergraduate students, when confronted with different types of sexually explicit situations (consensual, acquaintance/date rape, stranger rape), did not consider acquaintance rape to be "real" rape.

Many studies and education programs often focus on victims and victimization; however, this study will concentrate on student populations that hold attitudes that could contribute to sexually violent behavior. Aggressors and potential bystanders who have the ability to intervene could both hold these attitudes. By better understanding those who hold such beliefs, education could be more targeted to curtail these attitudes and behaviors that lead to sexual violence. The dialogue can be shifted so that the aggressor or bystander must take action to change, rather placing responsibility on the victim. The pervasive nature of sexual violence on college campuses leads to a compelling question: What are the contextual factors of HEIs that contribute to sexual violence? Understanding this answer is imperative for identifying perpetrators, protecting potential victims, and educating the general collegiate population effectively.

Contextual Factors of a College Campus

Title IX. At both the national and collegiate level, there exists efforts have been made to address sexual violence on college campuses. In 1972, the U.S. Congress passed Title IX, which states that "no person in the U.S. shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program that receives federal financial assistance" (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2015). More

specifically, Title IX identified unwelcome harassment, sexual advances, sexual touching, sexual comments, gestures, or requests for sexual favors as forbidden on college campuses (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2015).

To abide by the legal standards, many universities have made efforts to address the issue, establishing Title IX offices and creating prevention and education programs in which students and faculty participate. There are many claims, however, that victims looking for more information are often not given clear guidance about procedures regarding how to report an instance of sexual violence to administration, and many victims admonish college administration for failing to properly address claims that do surface due to various factors related to institutional self-interest (Dick, 2015). For example, an HEI might want to underreport the frequency of sexual violence on campus to protect their legacy, promote enrollment, and shield students and administrators who contribute significantly to revenue, such as athletes or fraternity alumni (Dick, 2015). According to findings from 2012, 45% of colleges reported zero cases of sexual assaults, and while one might argue that different types of schools could yield different frequencies of sexual assault and victimization, findings show no significant correlation between schools regarding size, whether they are public or private, whether they are religiously affiliated, and whether students consider them to be "party schools" ("Washington Post," 2015). If a victim cannot find the resources to report their assault, or there are several difficult or uncomfortable steps to do so, the incident might go unreported. Many HEIs have recently come under fire due to perceived leniency in the handling of sexual assault cases (Anderson & Clement, 2015). Students guilty of sexual assault are more likely to face lesser sanctions compared to expulsion, including temporary suspensions, paper submissions, attendance to a class, community service, or counseling. Kingkade (2017) found that, after surveying school administrators across the

country, fewer than one-third of sexual assault cases resulted in expulsion. Further, studies show that aggressors are often repeat offenders. Lisak and Miller (2002) found that 8% of college men commit more than 90% of sexual assaults, and repeat offenders commit an average of six or more acts of sexual assault.

Some aggressors are athletes contributing substantially to the university's revenue and reputation. The punishment of athletes is often rare, and case after case shows that HEIs expel or punish accused athletes after the completion of the season or collegiate athletic career (Dick, 2015). Ananiades (2012) argues that as a governing body, the National Collegiate Association of Athletics (NCAA) should regulate the issue of sexual violence among student-athletes by implementing a policy by which guilty aggressors become suspended from academic involvement in a manner similar to policies that regulate gambling and alcohol use. However, the NCAA leaves disciplinary decisions related to sexual violence up to HEIs, which Ananiades views as problematic due to the self-interested nature of colleges and athletic departments (2012). The NCAA recently crafted a policy that focuses on the education of athletes about sexual violence, rather than specify sanctions for athlete-aggressors (Russo, 2018). Researchers and activists alike argue that the systemic nature of sexual violence could require interventions at the institutional-level to promote real change among groups and individuals. Armstrong et al. (2006) argue:

> Without a change in institutional arrangements, efforts to change cultural beliefs are undermined by the cultural commonsense generated by encounters with institutions. Efforts to educate about sexual assault will not succeed if the university continues to support organizational arrangements that facilitate and even legitimate men's coercive sexual strategies (p. 496).

The authors propose that change must occur at all levels in order to make for safer campus climates. Understanding the identities and groups to which victims and aggressors belong will only provoke minimal change if not addressed at the organizational tier.

Campus education and prevention. Due to the recent increased awareness of sexual violence, many colleges have implemented efforts to educate the student population about this issue. Often, these programs are general, targeting the student population at large, and provide more guidance as to how one can avoid becoming a victim instead of focusing on potential perpetrators. For example, Bedera and Nordmeyer (2015) conducted an analysis of 40 college websites that focused on rape prevention and risk reduction tips. The researchers found that most tips were directed at women as potential victims, implying "the burden of sexual assault prevention still falls primarily on female students" (p. 533). From this study, the researchers discovered several recurrent themes perpetuated by HEIs: a) that women cannot trust anyone, b) women are vulnerable, c) safe places are nonexistent for women, and d) women should never be alone. Given that assailants have control over the sexual assault, one could argue that those individuals, rather than victims, should serve as the target of preventative efforts, rather than victims (Gilbert, Heesacker, & Gannon, 1991).

Further, some studies show that despite experiencing an intervention program, impacts on participants were short-term (Anderson & Whiston, 2005), and participants' beliefs about sexual violence were resistant to change (Rozee & Koss, 2001). Additionally, Berg, Lonsway, and Fitzgerald (1999) found that male participants showed a greater likelihood of committing rape after an intervention in which a female victim explained her sexual victimization. Foubert et al.'s targeted study shows that sexual violence prevention programs can be successful in impacting perpetrators' long-term behaviors and attitudes by carefully curating face-to-face program

content according to the specific audience's identities (2007). In this case, the audience consisted of first-year male students, and many of these students decided to join fraternities after the intervention program. A multitude of studies have found fraternity members to be an extremely high-risk population for perpetuating dangerous ideas related to sexual violence (Bleeker & Murnen, 2005; Crites, 2017; Seabrook et al., 2016), so this finding is positive. Studies show that an intervention can be effective in changing attitudes using the elaboration likelihood model as a guideline (Gilbert et al., 1991; Rosenthal, Heesacker, & Neimeyer, 1995), and that carefully crafting an intervention for a particular audience can have positive effects if it consists of potential bystanders and aggressors, rather than victims (Foubert et al., 2007). In order to orchestrate an educational program that has a greater impact on a targeted population, it is important to consider the following question: What type of student is at the highest risk of committing sexual violence or holding sexually violent attitudes, and what underlying cultural factors contribute to sexually violent attitudes and behaviors?

Cultural and Societal Factors

Cultural gender roles and norms. Gender roles are socially constructed cultural norms associated with one's gender and are different according to each gender (Whitley, 1988). Krieger and Dumka define gender roles as "men's and women's expression of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors considered 'appropriate' for their sex" (2006, p. 777) and are congruent with what it means to be "masculine" or "feminine" (Reidy, Sloan, & Zeichner, 2009). Normative expectations are ascribed beginning in childhood and adolescence as an individual interacts with peers, parents, authority figures, and various media, including television, movies, social media, and magazines (Aubrey, 2006; Turner, 2003; Vance, Sutter, & Perrin, 2015). Research contends that exposure to these normative messages during childhood and adolescence strongly influences

individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors into and throughout adulthood (Aubrey, 2004). It is important to note that gender norms are not biological, but rather, they are endorsed by society. In other words, society teaches individuals how to be "real" men and women and fit within the cultural landscape.

Masculinity and femininity. Further, in the context of the U.S., such traditional gender normative rules often prescribe how men and women should behave. Men are often socialized to be tough, authoritative, competitive, and heterosexual (Seabrook et al., 2018) in order to be considered "manly." Vandello and Bosson (2013) argue that not only is masculinity a performance done by men for other men, but that it is a status *awarded* to men by other men. Scholars argue that among groups of male peers, there is pressure to abide by traditional gender norms, such as engaging in sex and objectifying women, in order to fit the masculine stereotype (Seabrook et al., 2018). The precarious manhood thesis posits that masculinity is a status that is difficult to achieve ("hard won"), but can be "easily lost" if a man appears feminine, weak, homosexual, or non-sexual (Vandello & Bosson, 2013, p. 103). Hyper-masculinity is an attribute associated with particular all-male groups (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984), which emphasize that violence is "manly." Hyper-masculine groups encourage the use of aggression to solve problems, view the use of dominance over women as acceptable, see men and women as adversaries, and perceive women as "sexual conquests" (Murnen & Kohlman, 2007, p. 146).

Traditional feminine gender norms prescribe that women should be reserved and submissive, and should place importance on their attractiveness, gentleness, and non-aggressiveness (Adams, Behrens, Gann, & Schoen, 2017; Whitley, 1988). Additionally, femininity is also often associated with negatively viewed qualities, such as dependence, passivity, emotionality, and sensitivity, (McKelvie & Gold, 1994). Similar to men, women are

pressured to abide by cultural expectations and traditional gender norms of femininity, and researchers have found negative outcomes associated with all-female groups that conform to these norms. Adams et al. (2017) found that college women who expressed greater conformity to traditional gender role norms held significantly negative views of body image and body consciousness. Relatedly, Lunceford (2008) argues that by adhering to such traditional gender roles associated with femininity, women are reifying the culturally dominant, masculine position of sexuality.

Studies demonstrate that gender predicts aggressions (i.e., men are more aggressive than women), but that aggressive behavior is better predicted by gender role orientation. That is, the degree of masculinity predicted aggressiveness better than gender alone (Hammock & Richardson, 1992). Gage (2008) explored the construct of masculinity in her study, which made correlations between athletes who participate in sports central to the collegiate structure (such as football or hockey) that tend to involve physical violence, athletes who participate in sports on the margins (such as tennis or track and field), and non-athletes. She discovered that athletes who competed in "center" sports scored significantly higher on scales measuring hyper-masculinity, maintained lower attitudes toward women, and exhibited more sexual aggression compared to athletes who competed in "marginal" sports and non-athletes (2008). Reidy et al. (2009) also discovered a correlation between gender role orientation and aggression, but instead used a sample consisting of all female participants. The researchers found that female aggressors (self-reported and exhibited behavioral aggression) commonly endorsed traditional masculine traits. The degree of femininity among participants was unrelated or negatively associated with aggression in this study (Reidy et al., 2009). By focusing the study on a female sample, Reidy et al. (2009) validated the notion that gender role orientation predicts aggressive tendencies.

The socially prescribed qualities commonly attributed to the constructs of masculinity and femininity are often viewed as mutually exclusive entities (Pearlson, 2016). The dualistic nature of these entities seems to impart that when engaging in sex, members of each gender should conform to their adversarial roles dictated by society. Consequently, the current study seeks to affirm whether one's beliefs in abiding by traditional gender roles correlates with attitudes that support sexual violence.

Sexual double standard. Scholars acknowledge that there have been shifts in female sexuality and the portrayal of femininity within the past few decades (Eaton & Rose, 2011); however, researchers also acknowledge that there still persists a lack of agency and empowerment in regard to female sexuality (Jackson & Cram, 2003). This lack of progress is often attributed to society's perpetuation of a sexual double standard that aligns with gender and gender roles. Pearlson argues, "Traditional gender roles frame sexual expectations for men and women in different terms" (2016, p. 35). For example, men should want sex in any context, whether or not they are in a committed relationship (enacting the role of a "player"). Cultural norms dictate that a man should instigate sexual activity and exploration (Armstrong et al., 2010; Crawford & Popp, 2003). In contrast, women are often expected to behave in the opposite manner; in accordance with cultural expectations, they are allowed to have sex in a committed, monogamous relationship (or risk being considered a "slut") and their sexual behavior should be reserved or hidden from view (Bogle, 2008). A woman who chooses not to abide by these expectations runs the risk of being shamed or considered "easy" (e.g., walk of shame); she receives punishment for transgressing socially constructed norms (Lunceford, 2008). Rather than focus on sex, women are often taught to be more concerned with romance (Whitley, 1988). A

man's sexual behavior is often accepted, while the same behavior by a woman is framed negatively, thus perpetuating a sexual double standard (Lunceford, 2008; Pearlson, 2016).

Widespread cultural adherence to this gender role dichotomy leads to the socialization of men as aggressors, and of women as victims (Check & Malamuth, 1983; McKelvie & Gold, 1994). In their meta-analytic review that synthesizes the literature on the relationship between masculine ideology and sexual aggression, Murnen et al. stated, "Traditional gender roles encourage men to be violent in the name of 'masculinity' and women to be passive in order to be 'feminine'" (2002, p. 360). Further, societal messages often insinuate that it is acceptable for men and U.S. society at large to objectify women, instructing a woman to view her value as synonymous with her appearance (Adams et al., 2017). This degradation of an entire gender reifies the notion that a woman's purpose is physical utility to pleasure the male gaze or body. The adherence to traditional gender norms is problematic because men might view women's bodies as their right on which they can assert physical aggression, and women might feel it is their role to comply.

Sexual scripts. Scripting theory (Simon & Gagnon, 2003) posits that men and women follow culturally sanctioned scripts, which dictate behavior and are based on traditional gender roles, in their romantic relationships. Scripts are defined as cognitive models of expectations and beliefs that originate from social norms (Eaton & Rose, 2011). Scripts prescribe normative behavior expected in certain situations, and hetero-normative, culturally dominant dating scripts are a type of script that often outlines the content, progression, and circumstances of a sexual interaction between a man and woman (Eaton & Rose, 2011). For example, historically when dating, it has been expected that men are assertive and dominant; they pursue a woman, plan, and pay for the date. Alternatively, women are expected to take a more passive and submissive role;

they are the object of desire and eventually might yield to the man's advances. Simon and Gagnon claimed, "Stereotyped gender role postures designate the male role as taking possession of the object of desire and the female role to be serving as the object of desire" (1986, p. 544). Dating and sexual scripts often structure relational interactions according to the traditional role one is expected to play as a man or woman, and such scripts can lead to violence against women (Canan, Jozkowski, & Crawford, 2016).

Research in the 1980s found that strategies for maintaining power and control in sexual encounters were often gender-typed. For example, McCormick, Brannigan, and LaPlante (1984) presented college students with twenty descriptions of strategies to influence a date to have or avoid sex. Participants were directed to indicate the probable gender of the person initiating the encounter. Participants concluded that all strategies for initiating sex were more often performed by men, and all strategies for avoiding sex were more often initiated by women. These findings revealed that men were associated with having positive control over the sexual encounter and women had negative control (McCormick et al., 1984), and these gendered assumptions often manifest in dating scripts. If cultural scripts influence college students' perceptions toward sexual encounters, students might abide by the viewpoint that sexual coercion is a positive strategy men should use to convince women to have sex.

Scholars argue that sexual and dating scripts involve sexual coercion. Sexual coercion is defined as a "situation in which one person uses verbal or physical means (including the administration of drugs or alcohol, with or without the other person's consent) to obtain sexual activity against consent" (Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004, p. 91). In accordance with sexual scripts based on traditional gender norms, men are socialized by culture to view the pursuit of sex through the use of coercive or manipulative tactics as normative (Adams-Curtis & Forbes,

2004). This belief is dangerous because a woman's resistance or discomfort due to unwanted sexual coercion is viewed as a part of a game (token resistance), rather than as true resistance. Consequently, those who uphold traditional gender roles could be at greater risk of believing in rape myths, further contributing to the victimization of women.

One could argue that sexual coercion is a cultural script that could lead to rape and victim blaming. Further, whether or not one considers a sexual encounter to be rape or involve sexual coercion relates closely to the person making the evaluation, along with how they perceive the encounter (Emmers-Sommer & Allen, 1999). According to a meta-analysis conducted by Emmers-Sommer and Allen (1999), various factors contribute to the variability of perceptions related to an incident of rape. Two significant factors that the authors found included the sex of the person evaluating the incident and their attitude towards women. Research contends that men who are considered traditional in their gendered beliefs hold more negative views of women than do women or non-traditional men (Pollard, 1992). Another influential factor in the meta-analysis was the status of the relationship between involved individuals. Research shows that men and women are less likely to view unwanted sex in a close relationship as rape compared to a situation that involve strangers or individuals in a more distant relationship (Pollard, 1992). Further, other significant factors that influenced perceptions included: use of alcohol as an excuse for behavior, the method and degree to which a victim resisted (verbally saying "no" versus physically resisting), the strategy of coercion (verbal versus physical), perceptions related to rape justifiability or victim willingness (e.g., a woman "owes" a man sex because he paid for the meal), and level of sexual coercion (attempted sexual behavior, actual sexual behavior, actual rape). Results from Emmers-Sommer and Allen's meta-analysis revealed that different perceptions of the same sexual encounter, particularly according to gender, "indicate that acts are

viewed as less coercive and probably less serious by men than women" (1999, p. 674). Some of these perceptions that are favorable toward the aggressor, which seem to be closely related to hetero-normative dominant sexual scripts, could contribute to the sexually violent attitudes and behaviors of college students, especially male college students.

Rape myth acceptance. According to Canan et al. (2016), several factors, including rape myth acceptance (RMA), token resistance, hostility toward women, and sexual aggression, "all contribute to fostering a rape-prone culture" (p. 3). Rape myths are defined as "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women" (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, p. 134). Rape myths have several concurrent functions. They blame the victim, excuse the aggressor, and justify the aggressor's misbehavior (Payne et al., 1999). Further, there is danger in accepting antisocial behavior because research demonstrates there is a high correlation between attitude and behavior (Allen, Emmers, Gebhardt, & Giery, 1995). Rape myths manifest into sexual scripts that are rooted in one's adherence to traditional gender roles, which can lead to behavioral violence. For example, traditional gender roles prescribe that a man is sexually assertive, while a woman is submissive. One might believe that, in order to play her passive gender role, a woman initially says "no" to sex, but actually means "yes," which one might consider to be token resistance instead of actual resistance (Canan et al., 1999). Further, common rape myths perpetuate the idea that women routinely "cry rape," only certain types of women get raped, victims ask for rape (based on appearance or behavior), and that rape is just the result of men's uncontrollable desires (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999). Studies show that those who believe in rape myths are more likely to commit sexual assault, less likely to believe victims, and

less likely to intervene as a bystander (Grubb & Turner, 2012; McMahon, 2010). Such myths have become culturally normative, perpetuating sexual aggression.

A wealth of research has revealed important findings related to RMA. Warshaw (1994) conducted a study about college men's beliefs in rape myths and found that one in twelve men admitted to committing acts that met the legal definition of rape. Further, among those men, 84% were adamant that what they did was not defined as rape. These results show that college men often misunderstand legal and cultural definitions of rape (Warshaw, 1994). In an analysis that examined overall attitudes toward rape in the mid-1990s, scholars found that gender, older populations, traditional gender role beliefs, adversarial sexual beliefs, conservative political beliefs, and aggressiveness, among other variables, were predictors of RMA (Anderson, Cooper, & Okamura, 1997). More recently, Suarez and Gadalla also found in their meta-analysis that men displayed a significantly higher endorsement of RMA than women did, and RMA was strongly associated with hostile attitudes and behaviors toward women, lending credence to the notion that sexism endorses RMA (2010).

There is clear danger inherent in believing in rape myths because these attitudes can lead to sexually violent behavior, but they can also contribute to the inaction of a bystander or to the decision-making of a jury member. Allen et al. (1995) argue, "Acceptance of rape myths may mean that individuals become less tolerant of the rape victim and less likely to convict if serving on a jury" (p. 7). Further, women who also believe in rape myths might be less likely to report their victimhood or lend support to victims (Allen et al., 1995). Given past research on this topic, the current study seeks to discover what type of student within the college population might believe in rape myths and whether the findings of the past remain true today.

Individual and Group Factors

Social identity and social categorization. Social identity is defined as an individual's self-concept, which consists of one's unique personal identity, along with one's "knowledge that he [or she] belongs to certain social groups, together with some emotional and value significance to him [or her] of the group membership" (Tajfel, 1982, p. 31). Given this definition, one's social identity is closely linked to one's association with certain groups. Therefore, social categorization occurs when individuals are viewed as members of social groups, rather than as distinctive individuals (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997). Social categorization theory further expands upon social identity theory; it posits that an individual aligns oneself with a social group, which constructs and accentuates certain similar attitudes, behaviors, and emotions (Hogg & Hains, 1998). Such similarities define one's in-group, and this self-categorization into a group can depersonalize "perception and conduct such that members, including oneself, are not processed as complex, multidimensional whole persons but, rather, as embodiments of the contextually salient perceived group prototype" (Hogg & Hains, 1998, p. 326). In other words, an individual's attachment to a group can establish a cognitive alignment with group traits and tendencies. The group becomes an entity to which members ascribe their individual identity.

One's association with a group fulfills several human needs: the need to act effectively, the need to affiliate with a group, and the need to maintain a positive self-concept (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Cialdini & Trost, 1998). For example, people will use their in-groups as trusted reference groups during moral and social decision-making processes to meet the goal of accuracy if they view other members as trusted sources of information (Cialdini, 2007). To achieve the goal of affiliation, individuals may take certain required steps so that they are able to claim membership (e.g., application processes, initiation procedures, hazing). Relatedly, the goal to uphold a positive self-concept is a motivating factor that reinforces the other two. To evaluate

oneself positively, one would want to operate in a way that is consistent with one's values, while also aligning with group values, and these values would likely need to be viewed as morally or socially accurate (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Incongruence between an individual's and his or her group's values can lead to majority influence by the group on the individual so that the individual alters his or her own behaviors to maintain congruence (Oldmeadow, Platow, Foddy, & Anderson, 2003). According to Brase (2001), individuals often understand themselves in accordance to their in-group identity; so an individual might readjust his or her own beliefs to align with the mental state of the group to decrease cognitive dissonance. Consequently, an individual's goal to be accurate, to affiliate, and to maintain positive self-concept can lead to the social influencing of the individual by his or her group (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Wood, 2000).

Social influence and conformity. Social influence is a widely studied area that refers to many different phenomena. Conformity is one type of social influence and involves the changing of one's behaviors, attitudes, or beliefs to align with those upheld by the group (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Goldsmith, Clark, and Lafferty further describe the tendency to conform as "a global, enduring individual difference manifested by an individual predisposition to acquiesce to social norms prescribed by salient reference groups" (2005, p. 591). Research about conformity behavior and attitudes within groups was greatly catalyzed by Asch's line experiments in the 1950s, which provided evidence that individuals often modify judgments due to group pressure, even when the group judgment is clearly incorrect (1955). Throughout the decades following Asch's famous studies, social scientists have continued to verify that people are generally influenced by the "social sense" of their in-group, meaning that they are often guided by the beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and perceived internal states of group members (Kovács, Téglás, &

Endress, 2010; Stein, 2013). Further, the pressure to conform can be both overt (Milgram, 1974) and subtle (Freedman & Fraser, 1966), and scholars have discovered that merely witnessing the behavior of others can influence one's own behaviors and attitudes (Nolan, Schultz, Cialdini, Goldstein, & Griskevicius, 2008).

Influential factors. Scholars have determined that there are certain group and individual attributes that impact the strength of a group's influence, along with the likelihood that an individual member conforms. According to social impact theory, such factors include the group's strength (the importance the group has for the individual), the group's immediacy (the physical and temporal proximity of the group to the individual), and the number of people (majority influence) in the group (Latané, 1981). Further, Cialdini (2007) postulates there are six "weapons of influence" that guide human behavior, which include reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social proof of consensus, authority, liking, and scarcity. To varying degrees within different groups and among individual members, these factors may impact an individual's likelihood to conform. For example, a member who identifies strongly (high-identifier) with his or her in-group is more likely to act in accordance with group norms, even if these norms do not correspond with personal norms or values (Jetten et al., 1997). Additionally, numerous studies have shown that certain developmental and demographic factors have an impact on conformity. For example, Pasupathi (1999) found that one's likelihood to conform decreased with age, and Newman and Newman (1976) suggested that this likelihood among adolescent and young adults to be socially influenced by peers is reflected in increased substance abuse, risk-taking behavior, and sexual activity. Furthermore, gender and race have been shown to correlate with conformity and social influence to varying degrees. A recent study found that individuals are more prone to conformity when they are in homogeneous racial groups (Apfelbaum & Gaither, 2017). In the

review conducted by Carli (2001), men were generally found to be more influential in groups than women, and women were less influential when using dominant forms of communication. The review also revealed that men exhibited more resistance to a woman's influence than women did in the same situation, revealing a double standard related to perceived authority and gender (Carli, 2001). The gender composition of a group impacts the behaviors and interactions within the group. For example, studies show that when there are proportionally equal or more females in a group, males show more communal behavior and display more agreeableness (Johnson, Clay-Warner, & Funk, 1996). Carli further argues, "When females are in the majority, the male advantage is somewhat undercut by the opportunity for women to serve as allies to one another and by the greater communality of the interaction" (2001, p. 728), thus emphasizing the effect gender diversity and the redistribution of power can have in a group setting.

***Social norms*.** Social norms are described as standards or rules that govern how members of a group behave. These norms may or may not be explicitly stated and emerge from interacting with other members, and any deviation from accepted norms may result in a variety of social sanctions (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Individuals abide by normative standards in order to fulfill their needs, and while this can happen at a conscious level, normative influence can be particularly strong at an unconscious level (Nolan et al., 2008). Norms can influence an individual's perception and behavior even when the member is not in a group situation (Sherif & Sherif, 1965). According to social norms theory, individuals are often negatively influenced by inaccurate evaluations of how other group members think or act (Haines, 1997). When individuals make decisions, they consciously and unconsciously consider what other members in their social group would do (Kilmartin et al., 2008). Relatedly, studies show that college men often overestimate the degree of sexist and rape-supportive attitudes upheld by their peer groups

(Bruce, 2002). A potential consequence of this occurrence, based on social norms theory, is that "egalitarian men may be reluctant to challenge these attitudes in peers for fear of being ostracized" (Kilmartin et al., 2008, p. 264). One's reluctance to speak out against these misperceived ideas could preserve an environment that perpetuates toxic views towards women. The appearance of consensus can influence members to believe that the majority is sexist, potentially reifying normative values and behaviors that contribute to a cycle of sexual violence.

Impact of Social Influence on Campus

College student development. As the previous literature contends, it is a part of human nature to want to be associated with a group and to construct a social identity based on one's categorization within different groups. Further, the construction of one's social identity develops as students enter and experience college (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016). As such, the college context offers a new environment through which students must navigate in order to continue fulfilling the need to act effectively, the need to affiliate, and the need to maintain a positive self-concept (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). This unfamiliar social landscape could heighten students' propensity to be influenced by peer cultures. Further, during this time when students are in a state of transition, they might be less influenced by parental guidance and adult supervision, which means they are free to explore new aspects of their identity and discover new sources of influence. Pasupathi (1999) argued that younger college students, when compared to adults, are more concerned about what others think about them, maintain a less stable value system, have more interest in seeking out new opportunities, and are less self-assured in their own knowledge base. The instability related to these many factors could lead students to be more socially influenced by the new groups to which they identify and would like to affiliate, which can result in negative consequences.

Student groups on campus. A multitude of studies examine specific groups on campus that partake and encourage risk-taking behavior, which often manifests as a consequence of peer influence (Adams et al., 2017; Gage, 2008; Lee-Zorn, Buhrow Jr., & Vicario; 2012; Vartanian & Hopkinson, 2010). Many of these studies centrally focus on groups that are homogeneous in nature, often based on gender and/or race. One widely researched phenomenon among college student organizations is the hazing and initiation processes of prospective group members by more-senior members (McCreary, 2012). Although the act of enforcing or partaking in hazing activities might run contrary to an individual's personal value system, his or her desire to affiliate with a group can override personal sentiments. Relatedly, Barry (2007) conducted a review that synthesized literature, which explored the impact of Greek membership on alcohol-related beliefs. Key findings included that Greek members drank in greater quantities than non-Greek students, drinking was attributed to fitting in (e.g., one must drink to be considered "one of the boys"), and fraternity members were less likely to accept someone who did not drink (Barry, 2007). Further, researchers have found correlations between homogenous male groups, adherence to traditional gender roles and norms, and sexual violence. A myriad of studies found that all-male campus groups, such as fraternities and central athletic teams (e.g., football and hockey), tend to establish cultures that endorse sexually violent attitudes and behaviors. Murnen and Kohlman concluded in their meta-analytic review (2007) that fraternity members and college athletes held more attitudes and demonstrated more behaviors associated with sexual aggression compared to college men unaffiliated with athletics or Greek life, and these groups have been found to uphold views that support the adherence to traditional gender norm conformity.

Structural influence of HEIs. The structural nature of many college campuses creates environments that consist of homogenous groups, and as evidenced by the previous literature, it

is often purported that these environments can create cultures that sustain sexually violent attitudes and behaviors (Murnen & Kohlman, 2007). Adherence to these attitudes and behaviors could be a consequence of social influence and pressure to conform in insular environments that lack gender diversity. Armstrong et al. argued, "The clustering of homogeneous students intensifies the dynamics of student peer cultures" (2006, p. 488). The Greek system, athletic departments, gendered dormitories, and other organizational structures can create in-groups with which members strongly identify, and out-groups from which members differentiate. Further, if some of these groups are separated according to gender, and members of some of these groups uphold traditional gender norms, in- and out-groups might emerge, creating adversarial perceptions of the out-group. Based on the current literature, one could argue that members of insular gendered groups, particularly those that are all-male and elicit high identification, are at higher risk of conforming, maintaining traditional gender norms, and sustaining attitudes and behaviors that contribute to the issue of sexual violence on campus. This study will analyze students' identities (gender, race, sexual orientation, group membership, etc.), paralleled with students' attitudes toward traditional gender norms and sexual violence. In doing so, this study seeks to determine if correlations exist that are consistent with prior literature, and it also seeks to uncover new correlations that require further exploration.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

In order to explore the topics of sexual violence and social influence in relation to undergraduate college students, this study will use various attitudinal measurement scales and a hypothetical scenario that reveals the opinion of a victim-blaming majority group. The hypothetical scenario consists of four conditions, which vary according to participants' gender and the majority group's gender. After participants are exposed to the hypothetical scenario and

a male or female majority group's opinion, they will answer a series of questions about their own opinions of the scenario and rape myth acceptance more generally. The answers to these questions will help the researcher make conclusions related to how gender can influence individuals' beliefs about sexual violence.

Based on the review of the above literature, the researcher proposes several hypotheses and research questions that this study seeks to investigate. First, because individuals who are prone to conformity will be likely to align their beliefs to those held by a known majority, the researcher proposes the following:

Hypothesis 1: High conformists will be more likely to victim blame in both the male-majority and female-majority conditions.

Further, research contends that individuals who believe that men and women should behave according to their prescribed societal roles, particularly in dating or sexual scenarios, are prone to holding sexually violent views. As such, the researcher proposes the following:

Hypothesis 2: Participants who believe in traditional gender norms will be more likely to a) victim blame and b) endorse rape myths.

According to research that explores gender and influence, gender composition of the group has significant impact on the behaviors and interactions within the group. The review conducted by Carli (2001) found that generally, men are more influential than women (Lockheed, 1985), but this ability to influence depends on several moderators. Further, she found that men resist the influence of women more than women resist the influence of women. Studies show that women often have difficulty influencing groups of men even when they make the same contributions as men (Carli, 2001). Relatedly, Pollard (1992) found that the sex of an individual influences the way they perceive others, and that men with traditional gendered beliefs

have more negative attitudes toward women than do non-traditional men and women. Knowing this, one might argue that men (especially traditional men), will less likely be influenced by a group of women. However, when a woman is perceived as competent and a man has an opportunity to gain some sort of benefit by being influenced by the woman, studies show men will be less likely to resist the woman's influence (Pugh & Wahrman, 1983). In regard to the current study, men might perceive women as being more competent on the topic of sexual violence (sexual violence is sometimes viewed as a "woman's issue"), so men in the majority-female condition might be susceptible to their influence to victim blame. Notably, the researcher also believes that because individuals can identify with their same gender group, they will be more likely to conform if they are in the same-gender majority condition. The researcher also believes that within the context of the Me Too movement, women in the male-majority condition will be less likely to conform due to lack of trust and inability to identify with male counterparts. As such, the researcher proposes the following:

> **Hypothesis 3:** Female participants will be less likely to victim blame in the majority-male victim blaming condition than in the other three conditions.

In addition to the above hypotheses, the researcher seeks to answer the following research questions:

> **Research Question 1**: Does conformity tendency moderate the effect of majority opinion on victim blaming and rape myth acceptance?

For example, will a low-conforming man still identify with a male majority that victim blames? What will hold more strength: the group's influence or the individualistic trait?

Research Question 2: Do participants' beliefs in traditional gender norms moderate the effect of majority opinion on victim blaming and rape myth acceptance? Which factor will hold more influence: the influencer or the topic of influence (i.e., victim-blaming)? For example, will a traditional male conform to a group of women that victim blames? A traditional male might believe women should not make decisions, so will he conform to their decision since victim blaming relates closely to traditional beliefs?

Research Question 3: Do other influential aspects of students' identities impact victim blaming and rape myth acceptance? For example, does religious affiliation, age, athletic participation, etc. correlate with victim blaming?

This study will increase understanding of college students and factors that could contribute to sexually violent attitudes that lead to victim blaming. The researcher will gather information regarding participants' demographics, group affiliations, sexual violence training, propensity to conform, views toward traditional gender norms, likelihood to conform to victim blame, and beliefs in rape myths. This data will give administrators at HEIs and researchers a new outlook on how students could be influenced to hold dangerous attitudes that could contribute to sexual violence.

III. METHOD

Sample

The population of interest for the current study was undergraduate college students enrolled at a Midwestern university. Given the risk that undergraduate collegiate students have for either being an aggressor or victim of sexual violence, the researcher wanted to give focus to this population in the current study. Enrollment at this Midwestern university is approximately

27,000 students, and approximately 21,000 students are undergraduates. Approximately 46% of the total enrollment is male, and 54% is female. Participants were students enrolled in undergraduate communication courses at a large Midwestern university in the United States. Participants were awarded extra credit for contributing to the study.

Participants

At the start of the survey, participants provided demographics and information related to group membership: their age, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, education level, major, religious affiliation, athletic involvement, Greek life involvement, club involvement, living situation, and political affiliation. Participants were also asked questions related to sexual violence education.

Data were collected from 218 individuals who identified as being at least 18 years of age. Two respondents identified that they were not undergraduate students, and were thus not included in data analysis. Additionally, 6 participants took under 5 minutes to complete the survey and were excluded from analysis. Thus, the data analyzed consisted of 210 participant responses. The included participants ranged from 18 to older than 50 (M = 21.83, SD = 4.59). A total of 137 respondents identified as female (65.2%), 70 were male (33.3%) 2 were transgender (1%) and 1 preferred not to specify (0.5%). Regarding sexual orientation, 180 identified as heterosexual (85.7%), 7 identified as homosexual (3.3%), 18 were bisexual (8.6%), 2 were pansexual (1%) and 2 preferred not to specify (1%). One-hundred sixty-two participants identified as White (77.1%), 25 were Hispanic, Latinx or Spanish (11.9%), 16 were Black or African American (7.6%), 15 were Asian (7.1%), 4 were American Indian (1.9%), 1 was Middle Eastern or North African (0.5%), 1 was Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (0.5%), 2 preferred not to specify (1%), and 1 indicated “other” (0.5%).

Forty-eight participants indicated they were freshmen (22.9%), 54 were sophomores (25.7%), 56 were juniors (26.7%), 49 were seniors (23.3%), and 3 selected "other" (1.4%). Participants indicated their involvement in various types of groups. In regard to religious affiliation, there was a range of responses, with the most common selections being Roman Catholic (*n* = 56; 26.6%), none (*n* = 37; 17.6%), agnostic (*n* = 22; 10.5%), spiritual (*n* = 20; 9.5%), Protestant – Lutheran (*n* = 18; 8.6%), and atheist (*n* = 10; 4.8%). Thirty-nine participants revealed they were affiliated with an athletic team (18.6%), and 170 participants specified they were not involved in athletics (81%). Further, in regard to Greek life involvement, the majority (*n* = 196) indicated they were not involved in Greek life (93.3%), 4 stated they were in a fraternity (1.9%), and 10 stated they were in a sorority (4.8%). Most of the participants (*n* = 78) indicated they affiliate with the Democratic Party (37.1%), 41 affiliate with the Republican Party (19.5%), 41 did not indicate a party affiliation (19.5), 7 affiliate with the Libertarian Party (3.3%), 23 of participants indicated they were Independent (11%), 15 selected "prefer not to say" (7.1%), 1 participant affiliates with the Green Party (0.5%) and 4 participants selected "other" (1.9%).

A total of 139 of the participants indicated they did previously complete training on sexual violence (66.2%), whereas 71 said they did not complete sexual violence training (33.8%). One-hundred twenty-six participants stated they completed the training through the Midwestern university (60%), 37 indicated they completed it through their employer (17.6%), and 6 indicated "other" (2.9%). When asked how the training was conducted, most participants indicated it was online (*n* = 128; 61%), 25 stated it was a presentation (11.9%), and 19 indicated it was an in-person discussion (9%).

Procedure

Data for this study were gathered from survey responses through Qualtrics (2019) survey software. Participants were invited to take part in this study via email. Instructors of undergraduate communication courses at a Midwestern university were asked to send out an email consisting of information regarding the study and a link to the measures. Before individuals began the survey, they were provided with an initial message asking them to confirm their informed consent. The message included information to aid them in deciding whether they wanted to participate and explained the purpose, length, and voluntary nature of the study, risks/benefits of taking part in the study, and confidentiality. Participants were notified that some questions would relate to the topic of sexual violence and that they did not need to participate further if the subject was upsetting. They were reminded that they could choose to stop participating at any point during the study and were not required to finish answering questions. Participants were instructed to answer questions honestly and openly and would have the option to complete a related paper assignment for extra credit as an alternative option for participating in the study should they decide they did not want to complete the survey. Individuals were notified that after completing the survey or submitting the alternative assignment, they would receive extra credit points that would apply to their course in the department. In order to conceal the specific topic of study (e.g., conformity and victim blaming), participants were informed that they were participating in a study that was seeking to form an understanding of undergraduate students' decision-making processes.

Participants first answered questions regarding demographics and group affiliations. They also answered whether or not they have completed training related to sexual violence. Next, they completed the Conformity Scale, the Religiosity Scale, and the Sex Role Stereotyping Scale. Then they read the date rape vignette and answered a series of questions according to the

condition in which they are placed, which assessed victim blaming. Lastly, they completed the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (short form).

Measures

See Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire.

Demographics. Participants reported gender, sexual orientation, age, year in school, major, race, religious affiliation, on-campus group affiliation (Greek life, athletics, clubs), whether they live on or off campus, and whether they live in gendered accommodations (all male, all female, mixed, etc.).

Sexual violence training. Participants were asked whether they have completed training related to sexual violence. They were asked whether that training was facilitated through the university or elsewhere, in addition to the format of the training.

Religiosity scale. Participants were asked several questions to inform the researcher on the influence religion has on decision-making. Questions were related to frequency of religious service attendance and the impact the participant feels religion has on his or her life (Huber & Huber, 2012).

Self-report measure of conformity. The Conformity Scale is an 11-item questionnaire designed to assess an individual's propensity to conform to the group in various situations (Mehrabian & Stefl, 1995). The Conformity Scale was designed according to the understanding that conformity is characterized by one's inclination to identify with and emulate others, give in to a group's beliefs to avoid conflict, and to follow others rather than to lead (Mehrabian & Stefl, 1995). Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement regarding several statements. Examples of questions included in this scale are as follows: "Generally, I'd rather give in and go along for the sake of peace than struggle to have my way" and "I would be

the last one to change my opinion in a heated argument on a controversial topic." The response options for the items were configured on a 7-point scale, ranging from *1-Strongly Agree, 4-Neither Agree or Disagree*, and *7-Strongly Disagree*. A lower mean indicated high conformity tendencies ($M = 48.36$, $SD = 8.36$, $\alpha = .76$).

Gendered belief scale. Burt (1980) constructed several scales that assess beliefs that correspond to traditional gender norms and roles. The Sex Role Stereotyping Scale (SRS) consists of nine items that primarily assess one's views pertaining to appropriate behavior and roles for women. An example of a question included in the scale is as follows: "There is something wrong with a woman who doesn't want to marry and raise a family." Many of the questions included in this questionnaire reflect a sexual double standard that is often associated with beliefs in traditional gender roles. The researcher selected this scale to measure participants' beliefs regarding traditional gender norms and roles associated with both men and women. Endorsement of traditional gender roles was measured with a set of 9 items asking participants their level of agreement with the corresponding statements. The response options for the items were configured on a 7-point scale, ranging from *1-Strongly Agree, 4-Neither Agree or Disagree*, and *7-Strongly Disagree*. A lower mean indicated a stronger belief in traditional gender norms and roles ($M = 49.4$, $SD = 7.92$, $\alpha = .77$).

Victim blaming. Victim blaming was measured in two ways. First, in response to the sexual assault vignette, participants were presented with a 7-point scale that asked whether they would dismiss the case. Response options ranged from the case should be *1-Definitely dismissed, 4-Not sure*, and the case should be *7-Definitely pursued*. Lower scores of dismissal was one indicator of victim blaming ($M = 5.84$, $SD = 1.6$). The second indicator was a question that asked participants to designate responsibility. They were presented with a 7-point scale that asked

whether they thought Ben or Rachel was responsible. Response options ranged from *1-Ben was entirely responsible*, *4-Ben and Rachel were equally responsible*, and *7-Rachel was entirely responsible.* Higher scores indicated victim blaming because corresponding participants assigned complete responsibility to Rachel (M = 2.03, SD = .84).

Rape myth acceptance. According to Lonsway, and Fitzgerald (1994), rape myths about sexual violence against women are defined as "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women" (p. 134). This study incorporated a rape myth measure to determine whether participants sustained attitudes that could contribute to sexual violence. Further, there is research that reports rapists tend to believe in rape myths and have "calloused perceptions of their victims' reactions to being raped" (Check & Malamuth, 1983, p. 346). While Burt (1980) constructed a widely used Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMA), Payne et al. (1999) argue that previously existing measures of RMA were limited by three factors: 1) a well-defined, theoretically-based construct, 2) a clearly articulated domain of content, and 3) a comprehensive understanding of the domain structure. Consequently, the researchers conducted a series of studies to address these limitations to create a scale with better construct validity. This study will use a short form version of the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA-SF) constructed by Payne et al. (1999). The researchers created this scale according to the previously stated definition, and they paid close attention to "wording and polarity of items, and colloquial phrases were used intentionally" (p. 34). Payne et al. (1999) had originally created a scale that consisted of 45-items; however, the current study used the short form, also created by Payne et al., (1999), to avoid survey fatigue among participants in order to gather accurate data. Examples of items included in this study are as follows: "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" and "It is usually only women who dress suggestively that are raped." See the Appendix for full questionnaire of items used. The IRMA-SF consists of 17 items related to various categories of rape myths cited by Payne et al. (1999), including 4 from *She asked for it* (SA), 3 from *Rape is a deviant event* (DE), 2 from *It wasn't really rape* (NR), 2 from *He didn't mean to* (MT), 2 from *She wanted it* (WI), 2 from *She lied* (LI), 2 from *Rape is a trivial event* (TE), and 3 negatively worded filler items to help control response sets. The response options for the items were configured on a 7-point scale, ranging from *1-Strongly Agree, 4-Neither Agree or Disagree*, and *7-Strongly Disagree*. A lower mean indicated a strong endorsement of rape myths (M = 102.43, SD = 14.14, α = .91).

Materials

Date rape vignette. To better understand how conformity can lead to sexually violent attitudes, this study used an adapted date rape vignette about a specific incident of an ambiguous sexual encounter that could occur on a college campus. Several studies that explore topics related to sexual violence have harnessed vignettes to gather data pertaining to participants' attitudes (Carroll, 2009; Check & Malamuth, 1983; Muehlenhard & MacNaughton, 1988; Rosenthal et al., 1995). For example, Rosenthal et al. (1995) incorporated a vignette in their study, which was specifically selected due to its ability to predict sexually aggressive attitudes in college men.

Modeled after the vignette created by Rosenthal et al. (1995), Carroll (2009) developed a vignette specific to the university setting to assess rape-supportive attitudes and decision-making that requires participants to place responsibility on the victim or perpetrator, and it additionally asks participants to give possible reasons to account for why the incident took place. Carroll (2009) constructed this vignette, making sure that the incident was ambiguous in nature so that participants would be required to decide whether the incident was sexual assault or consensual

sex. The participant, acting as a decision maker on the school's judicial committee, was asked several questions after reading through the vignette. Participants were asked whether they believed the case should be pursued (supporting the fact that rape might have occurred and the incident requires further investigation to make a final decision) or dismissed (in support of the perpetrator that no assault occurred and no investigation was required). Further, participants were asked to whom they would assign more responsibility for the incident (victim or perpetrator) on a Likert-type scale. Carroll created this vignette with the help of a focus group of undergraduate students and tested it in several undergraduate classes.

The current study used an adapted version of Carroll's (2009) vignette to assess the rape-supportive attitudes related to victim blaming. The researcher of the current study made modifications to Carroll's vignette according to the findings garnered from Emmers-Sommer and Allen's (1999) meta-analysis of variables related to sexual coercion. The vignette used in the current study involves two students with a relatively short relational history who consume alcohol (which could be perceived as a coercion strategy), indicators of victim resistance (bruising), indicators of lack of consent (intoxication, blacking out from intoxication), and opportunities for the participant to evaluate rape justifiability (mutual attraction, some relational history, her outfit, intoxication). The open-ended responses offer an opportunity to understand which aspects in this depiction contributed to the respondents' decision-making.

Attitudinal conformity. After participants read through the date rape vignette, they were exposed to one of two conditions that operationalize conformity by referencing a previously conducted study. The participants learned that a study was conducted last year according to the above vignette to measure decision-making processes of undergraduate students. The two conditions differ according to the gender of a majority group because research shows that gender

can have a strong influence on one's susceptibility to being influenced (Carli, 2001; Johnson et al., 1996). For example, one condition reveals the opinion of a majority consisting of all men, whereas the second condition reveals the opinion of a majority consisting of all women. Participants read a version of the following, depending on the condition in which they were placed:

> A study was conducted last year to generate conclusions related to the decision-making processes of undergraduate (men OR women). The researchers wanted to learn more about the significant factors that might impact their decision-making. The (men OR women) were asked to read the following scenario and answer several questions. Please review the scenario before proceeding.
>
> After reading the above scenario, (men OR women) participating in this study were presented with the following: "Imagine you are on a student judicial committee and you must decide whether or not to dismiss or pursue this case further." The results indicated that 78% of (men OR women) in the study decided to dismiss the case.

After this explanation of the study and its results, participants were asked the following: "Why do you think most (men OR women) decided not to pursue the case for further investigation?" They were also asked: "If you were on the student judicial committee for this case, do you think the case should be: Definitely dismissed / Probably dismissed / Possibly dismissed / Not sure / Possibly pursued further / Probably pursued further / Definitely pursued further. Why is this your decision?"

> In addition, participants were presented with the following information:
>
> In the same study, the participants were asked the following: "Which of the two parties was more responsible for the incident: Ben or Rachel?" Results indicated that 71% of the (men OR women) in the study indicated that Rachel was mostly responsible.

After this description, participants answered the following question: "Why do you think most (men OR women) thought Rachel was mostly responsible?" They were also asked: "If you were on the student judicial committee for this case, which of the two parties do you think was more responsible for the incident?" Participants indicated on a 5-Point Likert scale whether they

believed Ben was entirely responsible / Ben was mostly responsible / Both Ben and Rachel were equally responsible / Rachel was mostly responsible / Rachel was entirely responsible. Lastly, they were asked to explain why they selected their answer to this question.

Debrief. After completing the survey, participants were debriefed that the statistics included in the description of the vignette were not true, and that the purpose of the study was to evaluate social influence as it relates to victim blaming. Participants were also provided with additional resources for further information about sexual violence and how to report an incident.

IV. RESULTS

Conformity and Victim Blaming

Hypothesis 1 predicted that high conformists would be more likely to victim blame in both the male-majority and female-majority conditions. A Pearson correlation tested the relationship between one's conformity level and victim blaming. There was small positive correlation between conformity and deciding to dismiss the case ($r = .15$, $p = .03$), and there was a nonsignificant negative correlation between conformity and likelihood to assign more responsibility to Rachel ($r = -.08$, $p = .26$). Therefore, conformity was related to victim blaming, and Hypothesis 1 receives partial support.

Traditional Gender Roles and Sexual Violence

Hypothesis 2 predicted that participants who believe in traditional gender norms would be more likely to both a) victim blame and b) endorse rape myths. A Pearson correlation tested the relationship between the above variables. Testing showed there exists a medium positive correlation between endorsement of traditional gender norms and deciding to dismiss the case ($r = .27$, $p < .01$). There was a moderate negative correlation between endorsement of traditional gender roles and likelihood to assign more responsibility to Rachel ($r = -.31$, $p < .01$). Therefore,

Hypothesis 2a receives support. Further, there was a large positive correlation between high endorsement of traditional gender roles and belief in rape myths ($r = .64$, $p < .01$). Thus, Hypothesis 2b was statistically supported.

Victim Blaming and Gender Influence

Hypothesis 3 predicted that female participants would be less likely to victim blame in the majority-male condition than in the other three conditions. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the how a participant's gender and the gender of the majority group might influence his or her propensity to victim blame. Both measures of victim blaming were analyzed. There was not a significant statistical interaction between the effects of gender and the gender of the majority group on one's propensity to dismiss the case, F (3, 203) = .99, $p = .32$, and assign responsibility to Rachel, F (3, 203) = .25, $p = .62$. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

While the differences garnered from ANOVA testing were not significant, the means were in the expected direction hypothesized for both measures of victim blaming (Table 3). For the measure that asked participants to make a decision about the case, females in the male majority condition were the least likely to victim blame by dismissing the case ($M = 6.2$, $SD =$ 1.37), followed by females in the female majority condition ($M = 6.01$, $SD = 1.57$), males in the male majority condition ($M = 5.64$, $SD = 1.4$), and males in the female majority condition ($M =$ 5, $SD = 1.97$). For the measure that asked participants to assign responsibility to one of the individuals involved in the incident, females in the male majority condition were again the least likely to victim blame ($M = 1.89$, $SD = .83$), followed closely by females in the female majority condition ($M = 1.93$, $SD = .83$), then males in the male majority condition ($M = 2.19$, $SD = .75$), and males in the female majority condition ($M = 2.35$, $SD = .92$). Therefore, the participants who

exhibited a higher tendency to victim blame were males in the female majority condition, and these findings are consistent between both measures of victim blaming: a) pursuing or dismissing the case and b) assigning responsibility to one of the parties.

Group Influence and Conformity Level

Research Question 1 sought to determine whether one's conformity tendency would moderate the effect of majority opinion on victim blaming and rape myth acceptance. The researcher wanted to discover whether the social influence of a gender group could overpower one's individualistic trait of low-conformity. In other words, which will hold more strength: the group's influence or the individualistic trait?

ANOVA was calculated to determine what would be the strongest predictor for a) victim blaming - dismissing or pursuing the case, b) victim blaming – assigning responsibility to Rachel or Ben, and c) rape myth acceptance in relation of level of conformity. Additionally, the researcher of the current study calculated a median split to divide the conformity variable so that one could make conclusions pertaining to higher and lower conformity levels among participants. Regardless of the dependent variable, a participant's gender was the strongest predictor overall. The relationships between variables according to each dependent variable are further discussed below.

Victim blaming: Decision about the case. Gender was the strongest predictor as to whether a participant decided to dismiss or pursue the case, F (7, 199) = 12.31, $p < .01$. For gender and degree of conformity, the F test was significant, F (7, 199) = 8.08, $p < .01$. The F test was also significant according to condition and degree of conformity, F (7, 199) = 5.13, $p = .03$. Several F tests led to non-significant results, including testing of condition, F (7,199) = 3.17, $p = .08$; degree of conformity, F (7, 199) = .01, $p = .94$; gender and condition, F (7,199) = 1.16, $p =$

25; and gender, degree of conformity, and condition, F (7, 199) = .57, p = .45. Furthermore, an analysis of means between the different groups (gender, condition, level of conformity) garnered interesting results. The group most likely to dismiss the case consisted of males in the female majority condition who identified as low conformists (M = 4.35, SD = 2.34). The group least likely to dismiss the case consisted of females in the male majority condition who identified as low conformists (M = 6.68, SD = .73). Table 4 includes a listing of the likelihood of dismissing the case between the 8 different groups. With exception to the group of males in the female majority condition, level of conformity was a secondary predictor of participants' decision about the case.

Victim blaming: Assigning responsibility. In this measure of victim blaming, gender was also the strongest predictor as to how a participant decided to assign responsibility for the incident, F (7, 199) = 8.54, p < .01. An F test using condition as a predictor, F (7, 199) = .64, p = .45, yielded non-significant results, in addition to degree of conformity, F (7, 199) = .21, p = .65; gender and condition, F (7, 199) = .25, p = .62; gender and degree of conformity, F (7, 199) = .58, p = .45; condition and degree of conformity, F (7, 199) = 2.32, p = .13; and gender, condition, and degree of conformity, F (7, 199) = .02, p = .89. A comparison of means reflected similar results as described above. The group most likely to assign more responsibility to Rachel consisted of males in the female majority condition who identified as low conformists (M = 2.53, SD = 1.07), and the group least likely to assign more responsibility to Rachel consisted of females in the male majority condition who identified as low conformists (M = 1.79, SD = .81). Table 4 includes a complete listing of means between variables.

Rape myth acceptance. A participant's gender was the strongest predictor of RMA, F (7, 198) = 31.34, p < .001. Degree of conformity was a strong secondary predictor of RMA, F (7,

198) = 11.37, $p < .001$. An F test using condition as a predictor, F (7, 198) = 14, $p = .71$, yielded non-significant results, in addition to testing of gender and condition, F (7, 198) = .19, $p = .66$; gender and degree of conformity, F (7, 198) = 1.57, $p = .21$; condition and degree of conformity, F (7, 198) = .09, $p = .77$; and gender, condition and degree of conformity, F (7, 198) = 1.9, $p = .17$. Interestingly, a comparison of means of RMA between variables led to dissimilar rankings than those discussed previously. The group most likely to endorse rape myths after reading through the vignette consisted of males in the female majority condition who identified as high conformists ($M = 5.38$, $SD = .87$). The group least likely to endorse rape myths after reading through the vignette consisted of females in the male majority who identified as low conformists ($M = 6.57$, $SD = .42$). A complete listing of means can be found on Table 4.

Gender Group Influence and Gender Role Orientation

Research Question 2 sought to discover whether participants' beliefs in traditional gender roles would moderate the effect of majority opinion on victim blaming and rape myth acceptance. In other words, which factor will hold more influence: the influencer or the topic of influence (i.e., victim-blaming)? For example, will a traditional male conform to a group of women that victim blames? A traditional male might believe women should not make decisions, so will he conform to their decision since victim blaming relates closely to traditional beliefs?

ANOVA was calculated to determine what would be the strongest predictor for a) victim blaming - dismissing or pursuing the case, b) victim blaming – assigning responsibility to Rachel or Ben, and c) rape myth acceptance, in relation to one's orientation toward traditional gender roles. Additionally, the researcher of the current study calculated a median split to divide the TGR variable so that one could make conclusions pertaining to participants who expressed higher and lower degrees of traditionality in their beliefs. Regardless of the dependent variable, a

participant's gender was the most consistent predictor overall. The relationships between variables according to each dependent variable are further discussed below.

Victim blaming: Decision about the case. A participant's gender was the most significant predictor after conducting an *F* test, $F(7, 198) = 12.32$, $p < .01$. After conducting an *F* test on gender and traditional gender role orientation, there was a significant result, $F(7, 198) = 9.8$, $p < .01$. An *F* test using condition as a predictor, $F(7, 198) = 2.87$, $p = .09$, yielded non-significant results, in addition to testing of gender role orientation, $F(7, 198) = 2.75$, $p = .1$; gender and condition, $F(7, 198) = 2.13$, $p = .15$; condition and gender role orientation, $F(7, 198) = 1.38$, $p = 24$; and gender, condition, and gender role orientation, $F(7, 198) = .02$, $p = .9$. The researcher compared means to determine which group was most likely to dismiss the case according to gender, condition, and degree of traditional beliefs of gender roles. The group most likely to dismiss the case consisted of males in the female majority who were less traditional ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 2.47$). The group least likely to dismiss the case consisted of females in the male majority who were less traditional ($M = 6.72$, $SD = .65$). A complete list of means between groups can be found on Table 5.

Victim blaming: Assigning responsibility. Gender was again the most significant predictor after conducting an *F* test, $F(7, 198) = 6.02$, $p = .02$. An *F* test also revealed that traditional gender role beliefs was also a significant predictor of assigning responsibility, $F(7, 198) = 3.92$, $p = .05$. An *F* test using condition as a predictor, $F(7, 198) = 1.05$, $p = .31$, yielded non-significant results, in addition to testing of gender and condition, $F(7, 198) = .23$, $p = .63$; gender and gender role orientation, $F(7, 198) = 1.58$, $p = .21$; condition and gender role orientation, $F(7, 198) = .07$, $p = .79$; and gender, condition, and gender role orientation, $F(7, 198) = .26$, $p = .61$. After a comparison of means, it was found that the group mostly likely to

assign responsibility for the incident to Rachel consisted of males in the female majority who were lower in traditional gender role beliefs ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 1.08$). The group that was least likely to assign responsibility for the incident to Rachel consisted of females in the male majority who scored lower on the traditional gender role beliefs scale ($M = 1.74$, $SD = .72$). A complete listing of means can be found on Table 5.

Rape myth acceptance. After conducting an F test, it was found that gender was a significant predictor of endorsement of rape myths, F (7, 198) = 20.95, $p < .001$. Additionally, traditional gender role orientation was a significant predictor of one's endorsement of rape myths, F (7, 198) = 47.662, $p < .001$. An F test using condition as a predictor, F (7, 198) = .49, $p = .49$, yielded non-significant results, in addition to testing of gender and condition, F (7, 198) = .59, $p = .44$; gender and gender role orientation, F (7, 198) = 1.21, $p = .27$; condition and gender role orientation, F (7, 198) = 1.23, $p = .27$; and gender, condition, and gender role orientation, F (7, 198) = .06, $p = .8$. A comparison of means between groups led to slightly dissimilar results than those associated with the victim blaming measures. The group mostly likely to endorse rape myths after reading the vignette consisted of males in the female majority group who scored more highly on the traditional gender role scale ($M = 5.37$, $SD = .81$). The group least likely to endorse rape myths after reading the vignette consisted of females in the male majority who scored lower on the traditional gender role scale ($M = 6.61$, $SD = .31$). Table 5 includes a complete listing of means across groups. Participants' beliefs in traditional gender roles was the strongest predictor, followed by participants' gender.

Exploring Other Influences

Research Question 3 sought to explore whether there are other influential aspects of students' identities impact victim blaming and rape myth acceptance. Degree of religiosity and

further exploration of conformity and TGRs were analyzed in relation to these dependent variables

Religiosity. A correlation tested the relationships between religiosity, victim blaming, and RMA. Testing showed there was no correlation between high religiosity and deciding to dismiss the case ($r = .05$, $p = .52$), and there was no correlation between assigning responsibility to Ben and religiosity ($r = -.10$, $p = .17$). There was also a small positive correlation between religiosity and RMA ($r = .22$, $p < .01$). Further, a comparison of means indicated that those who identified as more highly religious were more likely to victim blame and endorse rape myths (Table 6).

Conformity and traditional gender roles. Additionally, because the researcher of the current study did not expect the results associated with RQ1 and RQ2, specifically in regard to the fact that the group mostly likely to victim blame consisted of a) males in the female majority condition who identified as low conformists and b) males in the female majority condition who identified as being less traditional in their gender role orientation, the interplay between these variables was further explored. A Pearson correlation was conducted to determine the strength of relationship between conformity and TGR orientation; it showed that there was a moderate positive correlation ($r = .33$, $p < .01$). Further analysis of means after ANOVA testing showed that the group most likely to dismiss the case consisted of males in the female majority condition who identified as low conformists and non-traditional ($M = 4.33$), followed by males in the female majority condition who identified as low conformists and traditional ($M = 4.38$). An analysis of means of the victim blaming measure that required participants to assign responsibility to one of the parties found that males in the female majority condition who identified as low conformists and traditional ($M = 2.63$) assigned less responsibility to Ben,

followed by males in the female majority condition who identified as low conformists and less-traditional ($M = 2.44$).

V. DISCUSSION

Learning about the factors that can contribute to beliefs and behaviors associated with sexual violence, particularly those among undergraduate college students, helps grant better understanding of how individuals might be socially influenced to victim blame and hold dangerous perceptions related to sexual activity. This study extends previous understanding of variables that contribute to sexually violent attitudes. To develop this literature, an exploratory study assessed the responses of 210 participants attending a Midwestern university. Undergraduate students were asked to disclose information that revealed individual characteristics (demographics, degree of conformity, traditional gender role orientation), in addition to providing their perceptions related to sexual violence (date rape vignette, rape myth acceptance). The following sections describe the study's conclusions, theoretical implications, practical applications, and limitations. Finally, future directions for further exploration are presented.

Conclusions

Analysis of the current study's data indicated that: 1) One's predisposition to conform predicted the likelihood to victim blame, 2) Endorsement of traditional gender roles predicted victim blaming and rape myth acceptance, 3) The gender of an individual and the gender of the majority group influences one's propensity to victim blame; females in a male majority group were least likely to victim blame, whereas males in the female majority group were most likely to victim blame, 4) An exploration of the gender, condition, and conformity variables revealed that a male in the female majority condition who was a low conformist was the most likely to

victim blame, 5) An analysis of the gender, condition, and TGR variables revealed that a male in the female majority condition who was less traditional was the most likely to victim blame, and 6) other aspects of participants' identities predicted victim blaming and RMA. It is noteworthy to specify that participants in the current study did not significantly endorse rape myths (M = 102.43, SD = 14.14), traditional gender roles (M = 49.4, SD = 7.92), or victim blame according to the decision-making (M = 5.84, SD = 1.6) or responsibility (M = 2.03, SD = .84) measures, which is encouraging.

Conformity. According to Latané (1981), there are several factors that can influence conformity, including group strength (importance to the individual), immediacy (temporal or proxemic distance) and group size. Interestingly, although the current study operationalized conformity in a way in which there was no relational history between the group and the participant, there was substantial temporal and proxemic distance, and there was no indicator of group size (participants were only given a majority percentage), high conformists were still more likely to victim blame regardless of the gender condition in which they were placed.

Furthermore, a potential explanation could relate to Cialdini's (2007) weapons of influence that guide human behavior related to social influence and can lead to persuasion. These weapons include reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social proof of consensus, authority, liking, and scarcity. The weapons that appear to be relevant to the current study could include social proof of consensus and liking. The participants were provided with a percentage indicating the majority group's opinion regarding how they decided to move forward with the case and to whom more responsibility should be assigned. According to Cialdini (2007), a high conformist would be susceptible to conform to the decisions corresponding with the statistical majority, which was the case in the current study. Relevant to this study's findings, longstanding research

found that group influence leads to conformity even with no relational history (Asch, 1955). Merely witnessing or learning of the attitudes and behaviors of others influences one's own attitudes and behaviors (Nolan et al., 2008). Additionally, liking, or perceived similarity, could have been a factor if participants felt they identified with the group exerting influence. In this case, the only aspects to which they might have identified would have been gender and the revelation that undergraduate students were involved in the previous study. Studies have shown that the gender composition of the group can impact behaviors and interactions within a group (Johnson et al., 1996). This source of influence will be explored later in this discussion section.

Traditional gender roles. With regard to traditional gender role orientation, victim blaming, and endorsement or rape myths, the findings of the current study reflect those found previously. Simon and Ganon write, "Stereotyped gender role postures designate the male role as taking possession the object of desire and the female role to be serving as the object of desire" (1986, p. 544). If a participant held highly traditional beliefs associated with gender roles, perhaps he or she did not view the situation depicted in the vignette as problematic. A highly traditional participant might have concluded that each individual involved in the incident was merely playing his or her traditional role and following sexual scripts (Eaton & Rose, 2011). Ben seemed to be dominant, assertive, and focused on sex, whereas Rachel seemed to be more passive and interested in romance. As such, an individual might determine that Rachel's desire to report the incident after it took place was token shame/resistance or was motivated by a desire to get revenge on Ben. These assumptions correspond with rape myths that blame the victim, excuse the aggressor, and justify the actions of the aggressor (Payne et al., 1999), and can lead to problematic decision-making (Allen et al., 1995).

Gender and victim blaming. As predicted, female participants were the least likely to victim blame when they were in the male majority condition, and the group that was most likely to victim blame consisted of males in the female majority condition. This finding is interesting if one considers the review conducted by Carli (2001), which synthesized literature on gender and social influence. One conclusion garnered from this review was that men generated more influence on groups than women in the same scenario, revealing a double standard. Further, men were more resistant to a woman's influence than were women.

However, previous literature reveals some moderators that affect the influence of gender. Johnson et al. (1996) found that the gender composition of a group impacts behaviors and attitudes in the group. When there was an equivalent ratio of male-to-female group members, or females remained in the majority, men were more agreeable and receptive to being influenced. The general consensus across the literature is that men are less likely to be influenced by women (Carli, 2001). However, when a woman is perceived as being more competent about a topic, and a man has an opportunity to achieve some sort of benefit from being influenced by her, Pugh and Wahrman (1983) found that men are more susceptible to her persuasion. This is relevant to the current study because the central topic of sexual violence has traditionally been viewed as a "woman's issue" (Katz, 2019). It is possible that the men in the female majority condition were influenced to victim blame because they determined that these women were "experts" on incidents involving sexual violence. Further, one could argue that victim blaming is favorable for men who might identify with the actions of the male aggressor. In support of the argument purported by Pugh and Wahrman (1983), perhaps there were two factors that influenced this particular group of men: 1) the perception that the female majority consisted of expert decision-makers because of the topic of sexual violence and 2) victim blaming was a favorable option if

they identified with the possible male aggressor. Due to the above factors, the researcher of the current study theorizes that these men deferred to women's decision-making and consequently were more prone to victim blame.

Gender and conformity. An interesting and important finding garnered from the current study is related to the intersection of an individual's gender, the gender of a majority group, and an individual's conformity tendencies, in addition to how this intersection moderates decision-making. Gender was the strongest predictor of victim blaming, which is consistent with previous findings (Carli, 2001). Conformity was a secondary predictor of victim blaming across conditions with one exception: Males in the female majority condition who identified as low conformists were the most likely to victim blame. The researcher of the current study suspected this group would fall in the middle range when it came to victim blaming, so how can one account for this finding?

One potential explanation relates to the study conducted by Scher et al. (2007), which operationalized conformity in numerous ways: a self-report measure, a behavioral measure, and an evaluation of participants' reactions to several vignettes within a group setting. The main finding was that self-report measures of conformity might not be an accurate approach to measure this construct due to situational factors (lack of group identification, affiliation, real people), lack of self-awareness, and social desirability. In reality, actual levels of conformity tend to be much higher in behavioral measures when compared to self-reported measures (Scher et al., 2007, p. 186). In this case, it is possible that because U.S. culture places value on individualism and making independent decisions, social desirability led to biased, inaccurate responses that prompted participants to indicate they conform less often than they actually do. As such, the self-reported measure of conformity did not align with the measures of victim blaming.

While the above explanation is possible, it does not account for the lack of consistency across conditions. If social desirability and/or lack of awareness influenced some male participants to inaccurately evaluate their own conformist tendencies, why did this not seem to be a significant factor that had influence among the other groups? The following section will explore other potential causal factors that led to similarly interesting findings.

Gender and traditional gender roles. The findings associated with Research Question 2 closely mirrored those associated with Research Question 1. The group of participants most likely to victim blame across conditions consisted of males in the female majority group who had a non-traditional orientation toward gender roles. Because of these findings, this study further explored the interaction of variables. When considering gender, condition, conformity tendency, and gender role orientation, the group most likely to dismiss the case consisted of males in the female majority condition who identified as low conformists and non-traditional. This finding begs a central question: If these males identified as low conformists and non-traditional, why were they the most likely group to dismiss the case? The proceeding section will next explore three possible interrelated explanations for these findings, including 1) the current salience of gender inequality, 2) conflicting value systems, and 3) limited understanding of sexual violence.

First, one must consider the potential impact the current cultural landscape could have had on perceptions of the case. Issues related to sexual violence and feminism have become more salient in recent years (Bennett, 2017). This heightened awareness toward gendered issues, in conjunction with certain participants' self-identities, potentially influenced their decisions pertaining to the case used in the current study. For example, one could again consider the findings made by Pugh and Wahrman (1983); if a man perceives a woman is well-informed about a certain topic (e.g., sexual violence), she would be more capable of influencing a man to

uphold her viewpoint. This might have been a causal factor of influence because sexual violence is often designated a "women's issue" (Katz, 2019). Additionally, one could consider the current time period that has observed the *Me Too* movement, which has prompted public discourse pertaining to sexual violence and seems to have heightened sensitivity to topics that are sexual in nature (Bennett, 2017). One could assume that a man who considers himself as non-traditional in his gender role orientation is willing to listen to women, is sensitive to women's issues, and perhaps even identifies as a feminist. Within the current cultural landscape that has unveiled the pervasiveness of violence against women, in addition to the fact that the public often discredits women's voices, it is possible this group of men chose to believe the majority group when it contained voices that they believed were the most credible on this issue; the voices of women. This is problematic when studies have shown even women do not understand what constitutes sexual violence or consent ("Washington Post", 2015). While studies show women are more likely to be victims of sexual violence, they are not necessarily experts on all related matters.

A second causal factor could relate to participants' conflicting value systems, which led to conformity to the majority group's decision. Conformity can occur when an individual strongly identifies with a group. Social categorization theory posits that an individual aligns oneself with a social group, which constructs and accentuates certain similar attitudes, behaviors, and emotions (Hoggs & Hains, 1998). Arguably, one might expect that non-traditional men would not victim blame; however, the opposite was true in this study. The researcher of the current study proposes that this group of men experienced cognitive dissonance when their value systems clashed. Should one choose to believe a group of women on this gendered issue, especially if he, as an individual, identifies as a feminist? Or should he believe an individual woman's experience, which involved factors that indicated sexual assault might have taken

place? Incongruence between an individual's and group's values can lead to social influence, which causes the individual to alter his or her beliefs to maintain equivalence (Oldmeadow et al., 2003). In this case, for this specific group of men, the female majority group exerted significant influence over their decisions, despite the fact that these men identified as low conformists and non-traditional. One could argue that group phenomena overpowered individual traits and values.

Thirdly, one could theorize that participants have a limited understanding of what constitutes sexual violence. An interesting aspect associated with the current group currently being discussed (males in the female majority condition who were non-traditional) is the lack of consistency between their higher propensity to victim blame juxtaposed with the finding that they only reported moderate levels of RMA. The researcher of the current study presumed that these findings would be more congruent: degree of victim blaming would mirror their endorsement of rape myths (or lack thereof). However, this was not the outcome for this particular group. One potential explanation could be related to men's limited understanding of sexual violence beyond theoretical measures of dangerous sexual discourse, such as rape myths. Perhaps a non-traditional man can identify this dialogue when it is presented in a generalized format that does not involve actual people. This was the case in the current study with the RMA scale ("It is usually only *women* who dress suggestively that are raped") and the SRS scale ("A *woman* should be a virgin when *she* marries"). The scale items do not involve real, individual people, so it might be more feasible for one to identify problematic statements associated with sex and gender. However, the researcher of the current study theorizes that in real or realistic scenarios (e.g., vignette) involving sexual activity, right and wrong become ambiguous. One's capability of identifying sexual assault might be moderated by personal relationships, various

situational factors, and the predisposition to identify with the aggressor. In other words, it is possible some of the men in the current study have a definitional understanding of what constitutes sexual violence, but are less able to apply that understanding in reality. Although the vignette involved hypothetical individuals, the inclusion of names and details associated with the parties could have influenced participants' decisions if one compares this factor to the scales that describe "men" and "women" as general, distant groups of people. If this is factor had a causal effect, it is concerning to consider how one's decisions might be impacted when actual people are involved (such as when serving on juries and committees) or when one knows these people personally. This gap in understanding might have contributed to victim blaming.

Further, if the above is true, the results again differed significantly according to the gender of the participant. Female participants who were non-traditional were the least likely to victim blame and endorse rape myths. One could posit that this finding relates to the fact that women are often victims and therefore are exposed to real-life applications of these concepts because of their own experiences. It is possible that, unfortunately, because women are often victims, non-traditional women are able to better-understand conceptual definitions of sexual violence because they have observed these concepts personally, or at least have discussed them with other women. Perhaps non-traditional women can make the connection between concepts and incidents because they are confronted with such incidents more frequently. As such, it could be crucial to encourage dialogue pertaining to sexual violence between and across genders. It seems that conceptual definitions are not enough; the disclosure of real-life experiences could be required for comprehensive understanding of sexual violence to take place, particularly among men.

Theoretical Implications

The current study offers an exploration that intersects several widely studied topics: social influence, conformity, gender roles, and sexual violence. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of research that elucidates factors that can lead to sexual violent perceptions and/or behaviors. Theoretically, the current study builds on the general understanding of sexual scripts that are inherent in rape myths. It seems that while groups of individuals can recognize the sexually violent attitudes associated with TGRs, which are often ascribed to sexual scripts, certain groups can still be prone to victim blaming. Relatedly, according to scholars (Emmers-Sommer & Allen, 1999; Pollard, 1992), several significant factors that contribute to the variability of perceptions related to an incident of rape include the gender of the person evaluating the incident (which was supported by the data in the current study) and attitudes toward women (which was partially supported). The inconsistency of these findings reveals that one's attitudes toward women, based on measurement scales, might not fully represent one's attitudes or understanding of sexual violence. Additionally, this study builds upon the understanding of how gender can lead to conformity. While studies have shown men are more influential than women in terms of persuasion (Carli, 2001), the topic can have salience and can override the gender variable of the influencer (Pugh & Wahrman, 1983). Further, one must consider the strong impact one's peer group, a group that could exert strong social influence based on social categorization, might have on individual beliefs. While it is positive that some men seem to be more willing to listen to women, it is concerning that men are susceptible to conformity when the women, in this case, might not be making the right decision related to the incident. The current study further reveals the impact social influence can have on an individual and exposes the dangerous outcomes associated with this group phenomena.

Practical Implications

This study has several practical applications. Of central importance is understanding how educators and organizations can approach communication related to the topic of sexual violence, particularly among college students who are an at-risk population for being involved in sexual violence as a perpetrator, bystander, or victim. This study has revealed populations of students who are more susceptible to holding attitudes that could potentially lead to victim blaming, which could further lead to sexually violent behavior. If organizations value and desire to protect all students, rather than those who are associated with fiscal outcomes, it is crucial that they carefully construct preventative interventions that are informed by research. By better understanding the influence gender, conformity, and the endorsement of TGRs and rape myths can have on one's attitudes, education and prevention methods can be curated in a way has influence on targeted individuals and groups, and therefore has maximum impact on university culture as a whole.

One important finding that reinforces the findings made by prior studies is the substantial role that gender plays on one's perception of the same incident involving possible sexual coercion. It appears that a varied perception exists between men's and women's understanding of what constitutes sexual violence, which leads them to evaluate the same situation much differently. Scholars assert that the danger inherent in this difference is that men might determine violent behavior to be normative, which informs their aggression; however, one can go beyond this aggressor standpoint to stipulate that men could, therefore, hold this viewpoint while serving on committees or juries, or while acting as a bystander who could intervene at the time of an incident (Allen et al., 1995). The current study additionally found some men who believe they are non-traditional, identify as low-conformists, and do not believe in rape myths were more

likely to victim blame. As such, the researcher of the current study proposes several recommendations.

First, it seems important to approach sexual violence prevention education using a strategy similar to the one harnessed by Foubert et al. (2007). This program, which specifically targeted a male audience, was titled "The Men's Program" and harnessed an approach grounded in belief systems theory. Facilitators spoke to the audience as if they were bystanders and advocates, rather than as potential aggressors. Further, rather than merely presenting the audience with definitions of consent and rape, a male police officer recalled his own victimhood of sexual assault. By strategically including the story of a masculine figure, the researchers hoped to create identification with participants. The peer facilitators prompted continued discussion after the officer told his story, and these facilitators helped participants to make connections to the victimhood experienced by women. Foubert et al.'s (2007) 7-month study yielded successful results; men who experienced the intervention program were much less likely to exhibit sexually violent attitudes and engage in problematic behaviors 7 months after the program, and this included fraternity members, a group at risk of becoming violent aggressors.

The successful results garnered from the study conducted by Foubert et al. (2007) relate to some of the conclusions made from the current study. It seems that individuals, particularly certain groups of men, do not view themselves as contributing to the issue of sexual violence. Arguably, there could be two central related factors that might significantly and positively influence educational outcomes for men: 1) drawing connections between abstract concepts and real-life experiences and 2) inciting identification with the victim. The current study found that men who identified as non-traditional also victim blamed, yet they did not often endorse rape myths. Consequently, there seems to exist a disparity between definitional constructs that are

more abstract and actual situations involving sexual violence. In "The Men's Program," educators drew connections by not only providing definitions, followed by victimhood storytelling, but also by incorporating discussion pertaining to realistic scenarios. This type of intervention could lead to more influential education of men so that they can feel competent about the subject of sexual violence and therefore do not need to defer to a majority opinion in order to make better judgments.

Additionally, identification plays a role that contributes to victim blaming. In the current study, men were more likely to victim blame, endorse gender roles, and endorse rape myths. Further, if a traditional man views his relationship with women as adversarial, he might be less likely to empathize with her viewpoint. A startling finding made by Berg et al. (1999) was that male participants showed an increased likelihood of committing rape after an intervention program that featured a female victim when compared to a male victim. One potential explanation for the outcome is the lack of identification between participants and the victim. To mitigate this disparity, "The Men's Program" incorporated the storytelling of a male participants might view as hypermasculine – a police officer. Potentially, this choice to use the victimhood of a strong male figure resonated with participants. Further, another means of relating men to women could be through the emphasis of the relationships the women hold with other men, as someone's daughter, sister, mother, wife, friend, etc. Unfortunately, giving more focus to relationship a female victim has with a man might activate a traditional man's empathy and a desire to protect the victim, rather than assume the responsibility should fall on the victim. It seems that connecting with potential aggressors and bystanders by harnessing the above methods could lead to resonating messages that prevent misunderstandings and misperceptions of sexual violence.

Relatedly, a plethora of researchers are currently undertaking a study that harnesses a "gender transformative" program that uses targeted intervention measures in order to yield informative results among a targeted at-risk population consisting of male adolescents (Abebe et al., 2018, p. 19). Entitled "Manhood 2.0," this program uses a multifaceted approach to promote awareness of sexual violence. Rooted in Social Norms Theory, Theory of Reasoned Action, and Theory of Gender and Power, this program requires careful training of educators so that they can facilitate discussions that challenge adolescent males' understanding related to harmful gender norms, in addition to educating them on how they can serve as influential bystanders. The scholars write:

> By encouraging critical reflection and challenging harmful and violent and inequitable behaviors in the context of heterosexual relationships, this intervention aims to address the parts of youth socialization that endorse norms, attitudes, and behaviors that facilitate violence and unhealthy behaviors. In doing so, the program aims to promote critical transformation of these norms toward gender equity (Abebe et al., 2018, p. 19).

The Manhood 2.0 intervention goes far beyond common education methods, such as those that consist of computer-mediated modules. This program educates participants through critical reflection and questioning, requires rehearsal of skills and engagement in discussion, and is reinforced over a 3 – 6 week period consisting of several sessions totaling 18 hours. Although the targeted population of this study is slightly younger (13-18 year olds) than those targeted in the current study (18 and older), the results will be insightful, particularly with a larger anticipated sample size (n = 866). Manhood 2.0 seems to bridge the gap of understanding between definitional construct and application by engaging participants in skill development and

rehearsal. The results and outcomes determined from this study can help inform future interventions at a collegiate level.

Limitations

The current study has several limitations, particularly in regard to the sample, data collection methods, and measurement scales. First, the researcher specifically wanted to limit the focus to undergraduate students within a shared university context. As such, the findings might not lead to conclusions that would be garnered at other universities. Additionally, the findings might not accurately reflect those that could be found in the general population, particularly due to the younger age of participants (M = 21.83, SD = 4.59). Further, the majority of the participants identified as female (N = 137, 65.2%), and 70 identified as male (33.3%), which could have an effect on the data. The researcher believes that a potential reason for less participation among males could have been related to the circumstantial time period that has observed cultural shifts. Due to recent public discourse pertaining to the issue of sexual violence (e.g., *Me Too* movement), the researcher suspects that some males might not have felt confident, comfortable, or knowledgeable enough to answer questions related sexual violence.

Another limitation to consider is related to the methods harnessed to conduct the study. Conformity as a construct is difficult to study, and it is further complicated to operationalize through a survey methodology. This study harnessed a vignette describing an ambiguous scenario that potentially involved sexual violence, followed by an explanation of the results of a hypothetical study conducted the previous year. The researcher questions the impact this operationalization of conformity could have had when participants in the current study were separated proximally and temporally from the disclosed hypothetical majority group of participants. If social influence depends on the strength of one's identification with a group, were

participants able to identify with the disclosed majority group even if they only were told of the group's sex and their views pertaining toward the case? These factors are important to consider in conjunction with the results. Perhaps an alternative operationalization of conformity could have prompted more statistically significant data.

The current study relied on previously tested measurement scales to collect data, in addition to a vignette modeled off of previous studies on group dynamics. One limitation is related to the scales used to determine conclusions about participants' perceptions of themselves and their orientations toward sex roles and rape myths. The current study included the Conformity Scale (Mehrabian & Stefl, 1995), which consisted of general statements determining the level of the participants' conformity. A limitation of operationalizing the construct of conformity in this way is that the statements included asking participants to make generalized determinations of their thoughts and behaviors (e.g., "I prefer to make my own way in life rather than find a group I can follow."), which might not apply across situations. Also, individuals are often biased when evaluating their own tendencies, so respondents might have answered in a way that they viewed as socially desirable.

The short form of the IRMA scale (Payne et al., 1999) was also used in the current study. A potential limitation could be found in the wording of several of the items. According to Payne et al. (1999), rape myths correspond closely with the time period, so scales measuring this construct require careful evaluation. The researcher of the current study used this scale because it was the most updated version that evaluated one's endorsement of rape myths; however, the current study was conducted 20 years after the creation of this scale, so a limitation is that the phrasing and terms used in this scale might not accurately signify rape myths that exist in current societal discourse.

One last limitation to consider is in regards to the vignette used to make determinations about victim blaming and social influence. Modeled after the vignette constructed by Carroll (2009), the vignette included in the current study purposefully detailed an ambiguous situation that might have involved sexual violence. The meta-analysis conducted by Emmers-Sommer and Allen (1999) on perceptions of sexual coercion revealed that there are specific factors that lead to varied perceptions of sexual experiences. Relevant factors included the sex of the person evaluating the situation, relational history of those involved, alcohol consumption, indicators of victim resistance (method and degree), strategy of coercion, among others. The central limitation related to the vignette is the impact the word choice and phrasing might have had on participants' victim blaming tendencies. For example, did including the detail that Rachel had bruising on her wrists significantly impact one's tendency to victim blame? Including and omitting certain details could have influenced participants' evaluation of the vignette. Future studies could explore this limitation and develop vignettes that vary the details, which could significantly influence participants' perceptions that contribute to victim blaming.

Future Directions

In addition to addressing the limitations discussed above, future research should continue examining variables that contribute to misperceptions that can lead to sexually violent attitudes and behaviors. A significant aspect of this research that would benefit from continued exploration relates to the operationalization of several variables. First, the measurement of conformity could be adjusted. Since behavioral measures have been found to elicit stronger conformity among participants, a behavioral measure that activates social influence could be employed, rather than a vignette. Alternatively, the situation described in the vignette could also be presented via video format, activating visual and auditory cues. Second, the details included

in the vignette could be adjusted in future studies. For example, rather than include details that indicate a victim's physical resistance, a future study could specify the victim's verbal resistance (e.g., saying or yelling "no"). Other details that lead to varied perceptions, according to Emmers-Sommer and Allen (1999), could be adjusted to determine conclusions, which could establish a case that is more or less ambiguous than the one used in the current study. Thirdly, one could further explore the construct of gender. For example, what are the results when the gender of the aggressor and victim are reversed? Even slight modifications of the variables investigated could lead to interesting outcomes.

Further, replication of the current study, but within varied populations, could lead to insightful results. This study could be extended to other universities. Additionally, a version of this study could be applied to other groups within the general population to evaluate whether the findings are consistent among older age groups. The study could also focus on groups that exhibit traditionally hyper feminine and or hyper masculine ideals, such as fraternities, sororities, and athletic teams. Finally, qualitative research that delves deeper into the motivations and perceptions of participants could lead to rich data and generate significant novel conclusions.

Social issues that relate to sex and gender equality are constantly evolving, which means perspectives are also evolving. As such, it is imperative to continue studying the topic of sexual violence so that education and preventative measures can be adjusted to maximize effectiveness. The literature reviewed for the current study explored sexual violence at the individual, group, organizational, and cultural levels, highlighting that there is a significant need for change to happen at all levels in order to mitigate the startling statistics of sexual violence, not only within HEIs, but society at large. Implementing successful intervention programs informed by research can place the responsibility back on potential aggressors and bystanders, which is where it

belongs. The topic of sexual violence is multifaceted, with many variables to explore. However, the complexity inherent in this issue should not discourage further investigation if it means we can strategically intervene, effectively educate, and play a role in preventing victimhood.

VI. TABLES

Table 1

Sample Demographics

Demographic Characteristic	Mean	SD
Age	21.83	4.59
	Frequency	%
Sex		
Male	70	33.3
Female	137	65.2
Transgender	2	1
Prefer not to specify	1	0.5
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual or Straight	180	85.7
Homosexual	7	3.3
Bisexual	18	8.6
Prefer not to specify	2	1
Pansexual	2	1
Missing	1	0.5
Race		
White	162	77.1
Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish Origin	25	11.9
Black or African American	16	7.6
Asian	15	7.1
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	1.9
Middle Eastern or North African	1	0.5
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	0.5
Prefer not to specify	2	1
Other	1	0.5
Education Level		
Freshman	48	22.9
Sophomore	54	25.7
Junior	56	26.7
Senior	49	23.3
Other	3	1.4
Religious Affiliation		
Atheist	10	4.8
Agnostic	22	10.5
Buddhist	1	0.5
Jewish	3	1.4
Hindu	2	1
Roman Catholic	56	26.6
Protestant - Lutheran	18	8.6
Protestant - Evangelical	6	2.9
Protestant - Methodist	3	1.4
Historically Black Protestant	3	1.4
Greek Orthodox	3	1.4
Islam	7	3.3
Spiritual	20	9.5

None	37	17.6
Non-Denominational - Christian	7	3.3
Shamanism	2	1
Baptist	1	0.5
Episcopalian	1	0.5
Deciding	1	0.5
Athletic Team Affiliation (collegiate, club, intramural)		
Yes	39	18.6
No	170	81
Missing	1	0.5
Greek Life Affiliation		
Yes - Sorority	10	4.8
Yes - Fraternity	4	1.9
No	196	93.3
Live on Campus		
Yes	61	29
No	148	70.5
Living Arrangements		
All Women	65	31
All Men	38	18.1
Mix of Men and Women	26	12.4
Live Alone	6	2.8
With Significant Other Only	3	1.4
With Family	69	33
Other	1	0.5
Political Affiliation		
Republican Party	41	19.5
Democratic Party	78	37.1
Independent	23	11
Libertarian Party	7	3.3
Green Party	1	0.5
Prefer not to say	15	7.1
Other	4	1.9
Missing	41	19.5
Completed Sexual Violence Training		
Yes	139	66.2
No	71	33.8
Organization that Conducted Sexual Violence Training		
UW - Milwaukee	126	60
Employer	37	17.6
Other	6	2.9
Format of Training		
In-Person Discussion	19	9
Presentation	25	11.9
Online (videos, questions, and/or modules)	128	61

Table 2

Bivariate Correlation Matrix and Descriptive Statistics for Variables

Variable	*M (SD)*	*α*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Conformity	48.36 (8.36)	0.76						
2. Traditional Gender Roles	49.4 (7.92)	0.77	.33**					
3. Rape Myth Acceptance	102.43 (14.14)	0.91	.26**	.64**				
4. Religiosity	9.07 (2.86)	0.86	-.02	.30**	.22**			
5. Victim Blaming - Decision	5.84 (1.6)		.15*	.27**	.45**	.05		
6. Victim Blaming - Responsibility	2.03 (0.84)		-.08	-.31**	-.47**	-.10	-.43**	

Note: **Significant at the .01 level. *Significant at the .05 level.

Table 3

Comparisons of Victim Blaming According to Condition and Gender

Victim Blaming: Dismiss or Pursue Case				
Sex	Condition	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Male	Male Majority	5.64	1.4	36
	Female Majority	5	1.97	34
	Total	5.33	1.72	70
Female	Male Majority	6.2	1.37	66
	Female Majority	6.01	1.57	71
	Total	6.1	1.48	137
Total	Male Majority	6	1.4	102
	Female Majority	5.69	1.77	105
	Total	5.84	1.6	207
Victim Blaming: Assigning Responsibility				
Sex	Condition	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Male	Male Majority	2.19	0.75	36
	Female Majority	2.35	0.92	34
	Total	2.27	0.83	70
Female	Male Majority	1.89	0.83	66
	Female Majority	1.93	0.83	71
	Total	1.91	0.83	137
Total	Male Majority	2	0.81	102
	Female Majority	2.07	0.88	105
	Total	2.03	0.84	207

Table 4

Comparisons of Victim Blaming and RMA according to Gender, Condition, and Degree of Conformity

RQ1: Conformity and Victim Blaming - Dismiss or Pursue Case					
Sex	Condition	Level of Conformity	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Male	Male Majority	Higher	5.61	1.58	18
		Lower	5.67	1.24	18
		Total	5.64	1.4	36
	Female Majority	Higher	5.65	1.27	17
		Lower	4.35	2.34	17
		Total	5	1.97	34
Female	Male Majority	Higher	5.69	1.69	32
		Lower	6.68	0.73	34
		Total	6.2	1.37	66
	Female Majority	Higher	5.87	1.66	38
		Lower	6.18	1.47	33
		Total	6.01	1.57	71
RQ1: Conformity and Victim Blaming - Assign Responsibility					
Sex	Condition	Level of Conformity	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Male	Male Majority	Higher	2.22	0.73	18
		Lower	2.17	0.79	18
		Total	2.19	0.75	36
	Female Majority	Higher	2.18	0.73	17
		Lower	2.53	1.07	17
		Total	2.35	0.92	34
Female	Male Majority	Higher	2	0.84	32
		Lower	1.79	0.81	34
		Total	1.89	0.83	66
	Female Majority	Higher	1.87	0.91	38
		Lower	2	0.75	33
		Total	1.93	0.83	71
RQ1: Conformity and RMA					
Sex	Condition	Level of Conformity	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Male	Male Majority	Higher	5.59	0.95	18
		Lower	5.7	0.84	18
		Total	5.65	0.89	36
	Female Majority	Higher	5.38	0.87	17
		Lower	5.73	0.77	17
		Total	5.56	0.83	34
Female	Male Majority	Higher	5.87	0.86	32
		Lower	6.57	0.42	34
		Total	6.23	0.75	66
	Female Majority	Higher	6.06	0.8	37
		Lower	6.39	0.62	33
		Total	6.22	0.73	70

Table 5

Comparisons of Victim Blaming and RMA according to Gender, Condition, and Endorsement of Traditional Gender Roles

RQ1: Gender Role Beliefs and Victim Blaming - Dismiss or Pursue Case					
Sex	Condition	TGR	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Male	Male Majority	Higher	5.65	0.98	23
		Lower	5.62	1.98	13
		Total	5.64	1.4	36
	Female Majority	Higher	5.25	1.55	20
		Lower	4.64	2.47	14
		Total	5	1.97	34
Female	Male Majority	Higher	5.44	1.76	27
		Lower	6.72	0.65	39
		Total	6.2	1.37	66
	Female Majority	Higher	5.62	1.8	29
		Lower	6.44	0.92	41
		Total	6.1	1.41	70
RQ1: Gender Role Beliefs and Victim Blaming - Assign Responsibility					
Sex	Condition	TGR	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Male	Male Majority	Higher	2.26	0.69	23
		Lower	2.08	0.86	13
		Total	2.19	0.75	36
	Female Majority	Higher	2.35	0.81	20
		Lower	2.36	1.08	14
		Total	2.35	0.92	34
Female	Male Majority	Higher	2.11	0.93	27
		Lower	1.74	0.72	39
		Total	1.89	0.83	66
	Female Majority	Higher	2.21	0.94	29
		Lower	1.78	0.65	41
		Total	1.96	0.81	70
RQ1: Gender Role Beliefs and RMA					
Sex	Condition	TGR	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Male	Male Majority	Higher	5.38	0.87	23
		Lower	6.12	0.73	13
		Total	5.65	0.89	36
	Female Majority	Higher	5.37	0.81	20
		Lower	5.83	0.81	14
		Total	5.56	0.83	34
Female	Male Majority	Higher	5.68	0.86	27
		Lower	6.61	0.31	39
		Total	6.23	0.75	66
	Female Majority	Higher	5.78	0.8	29
		Lower	6.53	0.49	41
		Total	6.22	0.73	70

Table 6

Comparison of Degree of Religiosity, Victim Blaming, and Rape Myth Acceptance

Religiosity and Victim Blaming - Dismiss or Pursue Case			
Level of Religiosity	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Higher Religiosity	5.83	1.54	109
Lower Religiosity	5.86	1.67	98
Total	5.84	1.6	207
Religiosity and Victim Blaming - Assign Responsibility			
Level of Religiosity	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Higher Religiosity	2.09	0.86	109
Lower Religiosity	1.97	0.83	98
Total	2.03	0.84	207
Religiosity and Rape Myth Acceptance			
Level of Religiosity	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Higher Religiosity	5.89	0.88	109
Lower Religiosity	6.15	0.75	97
Total	6.01	0.83	206

VII. REFERENCES

Abebe, K. Z., Jones, K. A., Culyba, A. J., Feliz, N. B., Anderson, H., Torres, I., … Miller, E. (2018). Engendering healthy masculinities to prevent sexual violence: Rationale for and design of the Manhood 2.0 trial. *Contemporary Clinical Trials*, *71*, 18–32. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cct.2018.05.017

Adams, D. F., Behrens, E., Gann, L., & Schoen, E. (2017). Gender conformity, self-objectification, and body image for sorority and nonsorority women: A closer look. *Journal of American College Health*, *65*, 139–147. https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2016.1264406

Adams-Curtis, L. E., & Forbes, G. B. (2004). College women's experiences of sexual coercion: A review of cultural, perpetrator, victim, and situational variables. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, *5*, 91–122. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838003262331

Allen, M., Emmers, T., Gebhardt, L., & Giery, M. A. (1995). Exposure to pornography and acceptance of rape myths. *Journal of Communication*, *45*, 5–26. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1995.tb00711.x

Ananiades, T. (2012). Penalty on the field: Creating a NCAA sexual assault policy. *Jeffrey S. Moorad Sports Law Journal*, *19*, 463-479.

Anderson, K. B., Cooper, H., & Okamura, L. (1997). Individual differences and attitudes toward rape: A meta-analytic review. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *23*, 295–315. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167297233008

Anderson, N., & Clement, N. (2015, June 12). Poll: One in 5 women say they have been sexually assaulted in college. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/local/sexual-assault-poll/

Apfelbaum, E. P., & Gaither, S. E. (2017, June 29). Research shows when groups are diverse, individuals are less likely to go along with the crowd. *Entrepreneur*. Retrieved from https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/296339

Armstrong, E. A., Hamilton, L., & Sweeney, B. (2006). Sexual assault on campus: A multilevel, integrative approach to party rape. *Social Problems*, *53*, 483–499. https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2006.53.4.483

Asch, S. (1951). Effects of group pressure upon the modification and distortion of judgments. In H. Guetzkow (Ed.), *Groups, leadership and men*. Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press. Retrieved from https://www.gwern.net/docs/psychology/1952-asch.pdf

Aubrey, J. S. (2004). Sex and punishment: An examination of sexual consequences and the sexual double standard in teen programming. *Sex Roles*, *50*, 505–514. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:SERS.0000023070.87195.07

Aubrey, J. S. (2006). Exposure to sexually objectifying media and body self-perceptions among college women: An examination of the selective exposure hypothesis and the role of moderating variables. *Sex Roles*, *55*, 159–172. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-006-9070-7

Barry, A. E. (2007). Using theory-based constructs to explore the impact of Greek membership on alcohol-related beliefs and behaviors: A systematic literature review. *Journal of American College Health*, *56*, 307–315. https://doi.org/10.3200/JACH.56.3.307-316

Basile, K. C., Smith, S. G., Breiding, M. J., Black, M. C., & Mahendra, R. R. (2014). *Sexual violence surveillance: Uniform definitions and recommended data elements, Version 2.0*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv_surveillance_definitionsl-2009-a.pdf

Bedera, N., & Nordmeyer, K. (2015). "Never go out alone": An analysis of college rape prevention tips. *Sexuality & Culture*, *19*, 533–542. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-015-9274-5

Bennett, J. (2017, November 5). The 'click' moment: How the Weinstein scandal unleashed a tsunami. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/05/us/sexual-harrasment-weinstein-trump.html

Berg, D. R., Lonsway, K. A., & Fitzgerald, L. F. (1999). Rape prevention education for men: The effectiveness of empathy-induction techniques. *Journal of College Student Development*, *40*, 219–234.

Bleecker, E. T., & Murnen, S. K. (2005). Fraternity membership, the display of degrading sexual images of women, and rape myth acceptance. *Sex Roles*, *53*, 487–493. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-005-7136-6

Bogle, K. A. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus*. New York, NY: New York University Press. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uwm/detail.action?docID=2081642

Brase, G. L. (2001). Markers of social group membership as probabilistic cues in reasoning tasks. *Thinking & Reasoning*, *7*, 313–346. https://doi.org/10.1080/13546780143000062

Brousseau, M. M., Bergeron, S., Hébert, M., & McDuff, P. (2011). Sexual coercion victimization and perpetration in heterosexual couples: A dyadic investigation. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *40*, 363–372. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-010-9617-0

Bruce, S. (2002). The “a man” campaign: Marketing social norms to men to prevent sexual assault. *The Report on Social Norms*, 1-8.

Burt, M. R. (1980). Cultural myths and supports for rape. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *38*, 217–230. http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/10.1037/0022-3514.38.2.217

Canan, S. N., Jozkowski, K. N., & Crawford, B. L. (2016). Sexual assault supportive attitudes: Rape myth acceptance and token resistance in Greek and non-Greek college students from two university samples in the United States. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 3419-3438. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260516636064

Cantor, D., Fisher, B., Chibnall, S., Townsend, R., Lee, H., Bruce, C., & Thomas, G. (2017). *Report on the AAU campus climate survey on sexual assault and sexual misconduct* (1-134). Rockville, MD: Westat.

Carli, L. L. (2001). Gender and social influence. *Journal of Social Issues*, *57*, 725–741. https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00238

Carroll, J. A. (2009). *Impact of moral judgment and moral disengagement on rape-supportive attitudes in college males* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (Order No. 3369734).

Check, J. V., & Malamuth, N. M. (1983). Sex role stereotyping and reactions to depictions of stranger versus acquaintance rape. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *45*, 344–356. http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/10.1037/0022-3514.45.2.344

Cialdini, R. (2007). *Influence: The psychology of persuasion*. New York, NY: Collins Business.

Cialdini, R. B., & Goldstein, N. J. (2004). Social influence: Compliance and conformity. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *55*, 591–621. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.55.090902.142015

Cialdini, R. B., & Trost, M. R. (1998). Social influence: Social norms, conformity and compliance. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (4th ed., pp. 151–192). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Crawford, M., & Popp, D. (2003). Sexual double standards: A review and methodological critique of two decades of research. *Journal of Sex Research*, *40*, 13-26. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490309552163

Crites, T. (2017). *Assessing a routine activities explanation for sexual violence victimization among college students* (master's thesis). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (Order No. 10690564).

Daigle, L. E., Fisher, B. S., & Cullen, F. T. (2008). The violent and sexual victimization of college women: Is repeat victimization a problem? *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *23*, 1296–1313. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260508314293

Dick, K. (2015). *The hunting ground*. Chain Camera Pictures. Retrieved from http://thehuntinggroundfilm.com/

Douglas, K. A., & Collins, J. L. (1997). Results from the 1995 National College Health Risk Behavior Survey. *Journal of American College Health*, *46*, 55-66.

Eaton, A. A., & Rose, S. (2011). Has dating become more egalitarian? A 35 year review using sex roles. *Sex Roles*, *64*, 843–862. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-011-9957-9

Emmers-Sommer, T. M., & Allen, M. (1999). Variables related to sexual coercion: A path model. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *16*, 660–678. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407599165006

Fisher, B. S., Cullen, F. T., & Turner, M. G. (2000). *The sexual victimization of college women* (p. 47). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

Fisher, B. S., Daigle, L. E., Cullen, F. T., & Turner, M. G. (2003). Acknowledging sexual victimization as rape: Results from a national-level study. *Justice Quarterly*, *20*, 535–574. https://doi.org/10.1080/07418820300095611

Flezzani, J. D., & Benshoff, J. M. (2003). Understanding sexual aggression in male college students: The role of self-monitoring and pluralistic ignorance. *Journal of College Counseling*, *6*, 69-79. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1882.2003.tb00228.x

Foubert, J., Newberry, J., & Tatum, J. (2007). Behavior differences seven months later: Effects of a rape prevention program. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, *44*, 728–749. https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.1866

Freedman, J. L., & Fraser, S. C. (1966). Compliance without pressure: The foot-in-the-door technique. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *4*, 195–202. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0023552

Gage, E. A. (2008). Gender attitudes and sexual behaviors: Comparing center and marginal athletes and nonathletes in a collegiate setting. *Violence Against Women*, *14*, 1014–1032. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801208321987

Gavey, N. (2005). *Just sex?: The cultural scaffolding of rape*. London; New York: Routledge.

Gilbert, B. J., Heesacker, M., & Gannon, L. J. (1991). Changing the sexual aggression-supportive attitudes of men: A psychoeducational intervention. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *38*, 197–203. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.38.2.197

Goldsmith, R. E., Clark, R. A., & Lafferty, B. A. (2005). Tendency to conform: A new measure and its relationship to psychological reactance. *Psychological Reports*, *96*, 591–594. https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.96.3.591-594

Grubb, A., & Turner, E. (2012). Attribution of blame in rape cases: A review of the impact of rape myth acceptance, gender role conformity and substance use on victim blaming. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *17*, 443–452. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2012.06.002

Haines, M. P. (1997). *A social norms approach to preventing binge drinking at colleges and universities*. Washington, D.C.: Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention.

Hammock, G. S., & Richardson, D. R. (1992). Predictors of aggressive behavior. *Aggressive Behavior*, *18*, 219–229. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/1098-2337(1992)18:3<219::AID-AB2480180305>3.0.CO;2-P

Hogg, M. A., & Hains, S. C. (1998). Friendship and group identification: A new look at the role of cohesiveness in groupthink. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *28*, 323–341. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-0992(199805/06)28:3<323::AID-EJSP854>3.0.CO;2-Y

Huber, S., & Huber, O. (2012). The centrality of religiosity scale (CRS). *Religions*, *3*, 710–724. https://doi.org/doi:10.3390/rel3030710

Jackson, A., Gilliland, K., & Veneziano, L. (2006). Routine activity theory and sexual deviance among male college students. *Journal of Family Violence*, *21*, 449–460. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-006-9040-4

Jackson, S. M., & Cram, F. (2003). Disrupting the sexual double standard: Young women's talk about heterosexuality. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *42*, 113-127. https://doi.org/10.1348/014466603763276153

Jetten, J., Spears, R., & Manstead, A. S. R. (1997). Strength of identification and intergroup differentiation: The influence of group norms. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *27*, 603–609. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-0992(199709/10)27:5<603::AID-EJSP816>3.0.CO;2-B

Johnson, C., Clay-Warner, J., & Funk, S. J. (1996). Effects of authority structures and gender on interaction in same-sex task groups. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *59*, 221–236. https://doi.org/10.2307/2787020

Katz, J. (2019, February 1). Gender, power, and fairness: Why we can no longer see sexual violence as a women's issue. *TED Radio Hour*. Retrieved from https://www.npr.org/2019/02/01/689938588/jackson-katz-why-we-can-no-longer-see-sexual-violence-as-a-womens-issue

Kilmartin, C., Smith, T., Green, A., Heinzen, H., Kuchler, M., & Kolar, D. (2008). A real time social norms intervention to reduce male sexism. *Sex Roles, 59*, 264–273. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11199-008-9446-y

Kingkade, T. (2014, September 29). Fewer than one-third of campus sexual assault cases result in expulsion. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/29/campus-sexual-assault_n_5888742.html

Koss, M. P., & Gaines, J. A. (1993). The prediction of sexual aggression by alcohol use, athletic participation, and fraternity affiliation. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *8*, 94–108. https://doi.org/10.1177/088626093008001007

Koss, M. P., Gidycz, C. A., & Wisniewski, N. (1987). The scope of rape: Incidence and prevalence of sexual aggression and victimization in a national sample of higher education students. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *55*, 162–170. http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/10.1037/0022-006X.55.2.162

Kovács, Á. M., Téglás, E., & Endress, A. D. (2010). The social sense: Susceptibility to others' beliefs in human infants and adults. *Science Magazine*, *330*(6012), 1830–1834. http://doi.org/10.1126/science.1190792

Kreiger, T. C., & Dumka, L. E. (2006). The relationships between hypergender, gender, and psychological adjustment. *Sex Roles*, *54*, 777–785. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-006-9044-9

Latané, B. (1981). The psychology of social impact. *American Psychologist*, *36*, 343–356. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.36.4.343

Lee-Zorn, C. E., Buhrow, W., & Vicario, B. (2012). Is conformity a mediating variable on increased risk-taking behavior across years of membership in the Greek system? *Journal of Social Research & Policy*, *3*, 43–53. Retrieved from: http://www.jsrp.ro/content/JSRP-Vol3_Iss1_LEE-ZORN

Lisak, D., Gardinier, L., Nicksa, S. C., & Cote, A. M. (2010). False allegations of sexual assault: An analysis of ten years of reported cases. *Violence Against Women*, *16*, 1318–1334. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801210387747

Lisak, D., & Miller, P. M. (2002). Repeat rape and multiple offending among undetected rapists. *Violence and Victims*, *17*, 73–84. https://doi.org/10.1891/vivi.17.1.73.33638

Lockheed, M. (1985). Sex and social influence: A meta-analysis guided by theory. In J. Berger & M. Zelditch Jr. (Eds.), *Status, rewards, and influence: How expectations organize behavior*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lonsway, K. A., & Fitzgerald, L. F. (1994). Rape myths: In review. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *18*, 133–164. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1994.tb00448.x

Lunceford, B. (2008). The walk of shame: A normative description. *A Review of General Semantics*, *65*, 319–329. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/42578870

McCormick, N. B., Brannigan, G. G., & LaPlante, M. N. (1984). Social desirability in the bedroom: Role of approval motivation in sexual relationships. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, *11*, 303–314. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00287522

McCreary, G. R. (2012). *The impact of moral judgment and moral disengagement on hazing attitudes and bystander behavior in college males* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (Order No. 3540085).

McKelvie, M., & Gold, S. R. (1994). Hyperfemininity: Further definition of the construct. *Journal of Sex Research*, *31*, 219–228. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00224499409551755

McMahon, S. (2010). Rape myth beliefs and bystander attitudes among incoming college students. *Journal of American College Health*, *59*, 3–11. https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2010.483715

Mehrabian, A., & Stefl, C. A. (1995). Basic temperament components of loneliness, shyness, and conformity. *Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal*, *23*, 253. https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.1995.23.3.253

Milgram, S. (1974). *Obedience to authority; an experimental view*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Mosher, D. L., & Sirkin, M. (1984). Measuring a macho personality constellation. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *18*, 150–163. https://doi.org/10.1016/0092-6566(84)90026-6

Muehlenhard, C. L., & MacNaughton, J. S. (1988). Women's beliefs about women who "lead men on." *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *7*, 65–79. https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.1988.7.1.65

Murnen, S. K., & Kohlman, M. H. (2007). Athletic participation, fraternity membership, and sexual aggression among college men: A meta-analytic review. *Sex Roles*, *57*, 145–157. http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/10.1007/s11199-007-9225-1

Murnen, S. K., Wright, C., & Kaluzny, G. (2002). If "boys will be boys," then girls will be victims? A meta-analytic review of the research that relates masculine ideology to sexual aggression. *Sex Roles*, *46*, 359–375. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1020488928736

National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *The NCES fast facts tool provides quick answers to many education questions (National Center for Education Statistics)*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=804

Newman, B. M., & Newman, P. R. (2001). Group identity and alienation: Giving the we its due. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence; New York*, *30*, 515–538. http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/10.1023/A:1010480003929

Nolan, J. M., Schultz, P. W., Cialdini, R. B., Goldstein, N. J., & Griskevicius, V. (2008). Normative social influence is Underdetected. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *34*, 913–923. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167208316691

Oldmeadow, J. A., Platow, M. J., Foddy, M., & Anderson, D. (2003). Self-categorization, status, and social influence. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *66*, 138–152. https://doi.org/10.2307/1519844

Pasupathi, M. (1999). Age differences in response to conformity pressure for emotional and nonemotional material. *Psychology and Aging*, *14*, 170–174. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0882-7974.14.1.170

Patton, L. D., Renn, K. A., Guido, F. M., Quaye, S. J., Forney, D. S., & Evans, N. J. (2016). *Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Payne, D. L., Lonsway, K. A., & Fitzgerald, L. F. (1999). Rape myth acceptance: Exploration of its structure and its measurement using the Illinois rape myth acceptance scale. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *33*, 27–68. https://doi.org/10.1006/jrpe.1998.2238

Pearlson, R. S. (2016). *Hookups and gender norm conformity: The experiences of undergraduate women* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (Order No. 10144694). Pollard, P. (1992).

Pollard, P. Judgements about victims and attackers in depicted rapes: A review. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *31*, 307–326. https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1992.tb00975.x

Pugh, M. D., & Wahrman, R. (1983). Neutralizing sexism in mixed-sex groups: Do women have to be better than men? *American Journal of Sociology*, *88*, 746–762. http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/227731

Reidy, D. E., Sloan, C. A., & Zeichner, A. (2009). Gender role conformity and aggression: Influence of perpetrator and victim conformity on direct physical aggression in women.

Personality and Individual Differences, *46*, 231–235. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2008.10.008

Rosenthal, E. H., Heesacker, M., & Neimeyer, G. J. (1995). Changing the rape-supportive attitudes of traditional and nontraditional male and female college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *42*, 171–177. http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/10.1037/0022-0167.42.2.171

Rozee, P. D., & Koss, M. P. (2001). Rape: A century of resistance. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *25*, 295–311. https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-6402.00030

Russo, R. (2018, March 30). Why NCAA sexual assault policy stops short of punishment. *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved from http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/college/ct-spt-ncaa-sexual-assault-policy-punishment-20180330-story.html

Scher, N., Thompson, T., & Morgan, B. L. (2007). Self-monitoring and conformity: A comparison of self-report and behavioral measures. *Psi Chi Journal of Undergraduate Research*, *12*, 186–192. http://dx.doi.org/10.24839/1089-4136.JN12.4.186

Seabrook, R. C., Ward, L. M., & Giaccardi, S. (2018). Why is fraternity membership associated with sexual assault? Exploring the roles of conformity to masculine norms, pressure to uphold masculinity, and objectification of women. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, *19*, 3–13. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/men0000076

Sherif, M., & Sherif, C. W. (1965). Ingroup and intergroup relations. In J. O. Whittaker (Ed.), *Introduction to psychology*. Philadelphia: Saunders. Retrieved from https://brocku.ca/MeadProject/Sherif/Sherif_1965f.html

Simon, W., & Gagnon, J. H. (2003). Sexual scripts: Origins, influences and changes. *Qualitative Sociology*, *26*, 491–497. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:QUAS.0000005053.99846.e5

Stallen, M., Smidts, A., & Sanfey, A. (2013). Peer influence: Neural mechanisms underlying in-group conformity. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, *7*, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2013.00050

Stein, R. (2013). The pull of the group: Conscious conflict and the involuntary tendency towards conformity. *Consciousness and Cognition*, *22*, 788–794. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2013.04.009

Suarez, E., & Gadalla, T. M. (2010). Stop blaming the victim: A meta-analysis on rape myths. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *25,* (2010–2035).

Tajfel, H. (1982). Social psychology of intergroup relations. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *33*, 1–39. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.ps.33.020182.000245

Thurston, R. C., Chang, Y., Matthews, K. A., Känel, R. von, & Koenen, K. (2018). Association of sexual harassment and sexual assault with midlife women's mental and physical health. *JAMA Internal Medicine*. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2018.4886

Title IX and sex discrimination. (2015). U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html

Turner, J. S. (2003). *Dating and sexuality in America: A reference handbook*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.

Vance, K., Sutter, M., Perrin, P. B., & Heesacker, M. (2015). The media's sexual objectification of women, rape myth acceptance, and interpersonal violence. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, *24*, 569–587. https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2015.1029179

Vandello, J. A., & Bosson, J. K. (2013). Hard won and easily lost: A review and synthesis of theory and research on precarious manhood. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, *14*, 101–113. http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/10.1037/a0029826

Vartanian, L. R., & Hopkinson, M. M. (2010). Social connectedness, conformity, and internalization of societal standards of attractiveness. *Body Image*, *7*, 86–89. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2009.10.001

Warshaw, R. (1994). *I never called it rape: The Ms. report on recognizing, fighting, and surviving date and acquaintance rape*. New York, NY: HarperPerennial.

Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation survey of college students on sexual assault. (2015, June 12). *Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/apps/g/page/national/washington-post-kaiser-family-foundation-survey-of-college-students-on-sexual-assault/1726/

Whitley, B. E. (1988). The relation of gender-role orientation to sexual experience among college students. *Sex Roles*, *19*, 619–638. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00289740

Wood, W. (2000). Attitude change: Persuasion and social influence. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *51*, 539–570. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.51.1.539

World Health Organization, Injuries and Violence Prevention Department, World Health Organization, & Department of Gender and Women's Health. (2003). *Guidelines for medico-legal care for victims of sexual violence.* Geneva: World Health Organization. Retrieved from http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2004/924154628X.pdf

Zacharek, S., Dockterman, E., & Edwards, H. S. (2017, December 18). TIME person of the year 2017: The silence breakers. *TIME Magazine*. Retrieved from http://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-2017-silence-breakers/

VIII. APPENDIX

1. Demographics and group affiliations

- *Please answer the following questions:*

- What is your age?
    - Dropdown
- Select all that apply:
    - White (for example, German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc.)
    - Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin (for example, Mexican or Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran, Dominican, Colombian, etc.)
    - Black or African American (For example, African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somalian, etc.)
    - Asian (for example, Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc.)
    - American Indian or Alaska Native (for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, etc.)
    - Middle Eastern or North African (for example, Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian, etc.)
    - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (for example, Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, etc.)
    - Prefer not to specify
    - Other_____
- How do you identify?
    - Male
    - Female
    - Transgender
    - Prefer not to specify
    - Other_____
- How do you identify?
    - Heterosexual or straight
    - Homosexual
    - Bisexual
    - Prefer not to specify
    - Other_____
- Student level
    - Freshman
    - Sophomore
    - Junior
    - Senior
    - Other_____
- What is your major?
    - Open-ended
- What is your religious affiliation, if any?
    - Atheist
    - Agnostic
    - Buddhist

    - Jewish
    - Hindu
    - Roman Catholic
    - Protestant – Lutheran
    - Protestant – Evangelical
    - Protestant – Methodist
    - Historically Black Protestant
    - Greek Orthodox
    - Muslim
    - Spiritual
    - None
    - I don't know
    - Other_____
- Are you a member of an athletic team (collegiate, club, or intramural)?
    - Yes / no
    - If yes, which type (collegiate, club, or intramural) and which sport?
- Are you a member of Greek life (fraternity or sorority)?
    - Yes / no
    - If yes, fraternity or sorority?
- Are you a member of a club on campus?
    - Yes / no
- Do you live on campus?
    - Yes / no
- Please specify your living arrangements (on or off campus):
    - All female
    - All male
    - Mixed
    - I live at home with family
- What is your political affiliation?
    - Republican Party
    - Democratic Party
    - Independent
    - Libertarian Party
    - Green Party
    - I don't know
    - Prefer not to say
    - Other_____
- Sexual violence training
    - Have you completed a sexual violence training previously?
    - If yes, what organization conducted the training?
        - University of WI - Milwaukee
        - My employer
        - Other_____
    - How was the training conducted?
        - In-person discussion
        - Presentation

- Online (videos, questions, and/or modules)
- Other_____

2. Religiosity Scale

- Adapted from Huber & Huber, 2012, The Centrality of Religiosity Scale
- *Please answer the following questions:*
  - How often do you attend services?
    - Every week
    - Once a month
    - Once a year
    - Never
  - How important is religion in your life?
    - Very important
    - Important
    - Slightly important
    - Not important
    - No relevance
  - How often do you use religion to make decisions?
    - Always
    - Usually
    - Sometimes
    - Never

3. Self-Report Measure of Conformity

- From Mehrabian and Stefl, 1995, p. 258: The Conformity Scale (11 items)
- *Please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each of the statements below.*
  (+3 = very strong agreement / -3 = very strong disagreement).
    - I often rely on, and act upon, the advice of others. (+)
    - I would be the last one to change my opinion in a heated argument on a controversial topic. (-)
    - Generally, I'd rather give in and go along for the sake of peace than struggle to have my way. (+)
    - I tend to follow family tradition in making political decisions. (+)
    - Basically, my friends are the ones who decide what we do together. (+)
    - A charismatic and eloquent speaker can easily influence and change my ideas. (+)
    - I am more independent than conforming in my ways. (-)
    - If someone is very persuasive, I tend to change my opinion and go along with them. (+)
    - I don't give in to others easily. (-)
    - I tend to rely on others when I have to make an important decision quickly. (+)
    - I prefer to make my own way in life rather than find a group I can follow. (-)
      * Item scoring directions are given within parentheses following each item. All item-total correlations exceeded 40 in absolute value and had a mean absolute value of .54.

4. Gendered Belief Scale

- Burt's Sex Role Stereotyping Scale (see also Rosenthal et al., 1995)
  Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the statements below:
  7-Point Scale (strongly agree – strongly disagree)
  Sex role stereotyping
  A man should fight when the woman he's with is insulted by another man.
  It is acceptable for the woman to pay for the date.*
  A woman should be a virgin when she marries.
  There is something wrong with a woman who doesn't want to marry and raise a family.
  A wife should never contradict her husband in public.
  It is better for a woman to use her feminine charm to get what she wants rather than ask for it outright.
  It is acceptable for a woman to have a career, but marriage and family should come first.
  It looks worse for a woman to be drunk than for a man to be drunk.
  There is nothing wrong with a woman going to a bar alone.*
  Parentheses indicate Item-to-total correlation

5. Operationalization of Conformity

- Date Rape Vignette (DRV) (adapted from Carroll, 2009, p. 54)
- A study was conducted last year to generate conclusions related to the decision-making processes of undergraduate (men OR women). The researchers wanted to learn more about the significant factors that might impact their decisions. The (men OR women) were asked to read the following scenario and answer several questions. Please review the scenario before proceeding:
  Rachel and Liz were really excited about going to the biggest party of the year on campus. They went shopping early in the week to get sexy outfits for the theme party. Rachel and Liz were nervous when they first arrived because they didn't see many people they knew at the party. Soon after walking in, Rachel was happy to see Ben, a guy she had been talking to, bring over beers for her and Liz. Rachel and Ben talk, and Ben makes sure she has a drink in her hand the entire night.
  Later, Ben and Rachel danced for a while, did some shots, and partied all night. Ben was positive that he and Rachel were going to hook up, as he had been telling his friends all week. After seeing her sexy outfit, he was sure he was going to get some. Rachel thought Ben was a nice guy and she was really hoping that he would ask her to the football game after hanging out at the party. When the party was breaking up, Rachel was too drunk to walk home by herself. She couldn't find Liz anywhere, so she asked Ben to take her home. Ben told her they could go up to his room if she was tired and he would take her home later. Rachel was pretty drunk, so Ben had to carry her up to his room. One thing led to another and they ended up having sex.
  The next morning Rachel woke up and didn't remember anything after she took shots at the party. She saw a condom wrapper on the floor. She also noticed bruising on her wrists and freaked out. She went to the women's resource center and told them she had been raped at the party. When they questioned Ben about the night, he said that it was mutual consent.

- After reading the above scenario, the (men OR women) participating in this study were presented with the following: *"Imagine you are on a student judicial committee and you must decide whether or not to dismiss or pursue this case further."* The results indicated that 78% of (men OR women) in the study decided to dismiss the case.
    - Why do you think most (men OR women) decided not to pursue this case further?
        - Open-ended
    - If you were on the student judicial committee for this case, do you think the case should be:
        - 7-Point Likert Scale (Definitely dismissed / Probably dismissed / Possibly dismissed / Not sure / Possibly pursued / Probably pursued / Definitely pursued
    - Why is this your decision?
        - Open-ended
    - In the same study, the participants were asked the following: *"Which of the two parties was more responsible for the incident: Ben or Rachel?"* The (men OR women) in the study indicated that Rachel was mostly responsible. Why do you think most (men OR women) thought Rachel was mostly responsible?
        - Open-ended
    - If you were on the student judicial committee for this case, which of the two parties do you think was more responsible for the incident?
        - 5-Point Likert Scale (Ben was entirely responsible / Ben was mostly responsible / Both were equally responsible / Rachel was mostly responsible / Rachel was entirely responsible)
    - Why?
        - Open-ended

6. Rape Myth Acceptance

IRMA-SF Items (Short Form, Payne et al., 1999)

- *Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to each of the statements below:* 7-Point Scale – (Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree)

1. If a woman is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of control. (SA-3)
2. Although most women wouldn't admit it, they generally find being physically forced into sex a real "turn-on." (WI-5)
3. 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. (MT-3).
4. Many women secretly desire to be raped. (WI-1)
5. Most rapists are not caught by the police. (FI-2)
6. If a woman doesn't physically fight back, you can't really say that it was rape. (NR-1)
7. Men from nice middle-class homes almost never rape. (DE-2)
8. Rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at men. (LI-2)
9. All women should have access to self-defense classes. (FI-3)
10. It is usually only women who dress suggestively that are raped. (DE-3)
11. If the rapist doesn't have a weapon, you really can't call it a rape. (NR-3)
12. Rape is unlikely to happen in the woman's own familiar neighborhood. (DE-7)
13. Women tend to exaggerate how much rape affects them. (TE-2)

14. A lot of women lead a man on and then they cry rape. (LI-1)
15. It is preferable that a female police officer conducts the questioning when a woman reports a rape. (FI-4)
16. A woman who "teases" men deserves anything that might happen. (SA-5)
17. When women are raped, it's often because the way they said "no" was ambiguous. (SA-8)
18. Men don't usually intend to force sex on a woman, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away. (MT-1)
19. A woman who dresses in skimpy clothes should not be surprised if a man tries to force her to have sex. (SA-1)
20. Rape happens when a man's sex drive gets out of control. (MT-4)

    * Note: Item label refers to subscale corresponding to the item SA (she asked for it), NR (it was not rape), MT (he didn't mean to), LI (she lied), TL (rape is a trivial event), DE (rape is a deviant event), FI (filler item – isn't scored)