

Introduction

Court cases involving college sexual assault have recently begun garnering more attention. As these cases capture the public eye, efforts are being made to end rape culture and prevent future sexual assaults. One way to measure acceptance of rape culture in a population is through measuring endorsements of rape myths, or beliefs about rape that are accepted without evidence (Burt 1980). Previous studies have shown interventions that teach about consent are successful in decreasing the rate of rape myth acceptance (Fay & Medway, 2006; Lonsway, et al., 1998). Although such studies have shown a decrease in rape myth acceptance through test-retest methods, they do not take into account less formal consent training or the other constructs that contribute to rape myth acceptance. In this study, the researchers were concerned with the relationship between a history of consent training, levels of empathy, levels of sexism, and rape myth acceptance. This dynamic relationship was examined in hopes of gaining a greater understanding of the attitudes and experiences that contribute to the acceptance of rape myths.

Methods

Participants

- Students enrolled in psychology classes at Austin College and students in introductory psychology courses at Utah Valley University were invited to partake in the study through email.
- 164 students from Austin College (58.36% response rate) and 68 students from Utah Valley University responded to the survey.
- The mean age of participants was 20.66 (SD = 3.83) and most participants were female (68.2%) and White (64.7%).

Procedure

- After obtaining IRB approval, an email was sent to potential participants that included a link to the survey on SurveyMonkey.
- The first page of the survey included an informed consent statement that participants agreed to by continuing with the survey.
- The survey contained three scales, the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996), the Multidimensional Empathy Scale (Davis, 1980), and the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale Short Form (IRMA-SF; Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999).
- Participants also responded to questions about demographics and their history of sexual education and consent training.

Analyses

- Data were analyzed both as a full sample as well as separately by institution.

Results

Geographic Differences

- Most participants reported receiving sex ed (77.6%) and consent training (66.5%).
- Chi Square analysis did not reveal significant differences between AC and UVU for rates of sex ed, consent training, or formal consent training.
- A MANOVA found significant differences in means between AC and UVU for overall ASI score ($p < .001$), the ambivalent ($p < .001$) and hostile ($p = .003$) subscales, and IRMA scores ($p = .008$). Austin College had significantly lower scores on these measures (see Table 2).

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics for Student Responses to Classification Questions

Variable	n	M	SD	Min	Max
Age for Sex ed	154	12.44	2.02	6	21
Age for consent	172	15.41	2.74	8	23
Consent times	157	5.45	7.21	0	50
Age	201	20.66	3.83	18	49

Results (continued)

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics for Scale Scores. This table contains descriptive statistics for respondent scores on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, the hostile and ambivalent subscales of the inventory, the overall and subscale scores for the Multidimensional Empathy Scale, and the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Short Form.

Variable	All Data				AC				UVU			
	n	M	SD	Range	n	M	SD	Range	n	M	SD	Range
Hostile	198	1.75	0.89	5.00	131	1.63	0.82	4.55	67	1.99	0.98	4.73
Ambivalent	199	2.41	0.82	4.09	133	2.20	0.78	3.45	66	2.83	0.74	3.55
ASI	197	2.07	0.73	3.82	131	1.92	0.67	3.55	66	2.39	0.74	3.54
Fantasy	197	18.67	5.85	24.00	131	18.50	5.84	24.00	66	19.02	5.91	21.00
Perspective Taking	198	19.02	5.02	24.00	131	18.90	5.23	24.00	67	19.24	4.61	19.00
Empathic Concern	198	20.70	4.29	21.00	132	20.58	4.16	21.00	66	20.94	4.58	18.00
Personal Distress	197	12.37	5.49	28.00	133	12.81	5.71	28.00	64	11.44	4.91	22.00
Empathy	189	71.16	12.90	73.00	127	71.03	13.29	73.00	62	71.44	12.16	61.00
IRMA	201	1.77	0.77	4.41	134	1.67	0.67	3.65	67	1.96	0.90	4.41

Regression Analyses

- Regression analyses were run to examine identify significant predictors of scores on the IRMA (see Table 3).
- Significant predictors for lower IRMA scores in the full sample were being an athlete ($p = .01$), being female ($p = .02$), and lower score on hostile sexism subscale of the ASI ($p < .001$).
- Significant predictors for lower IRMA scores in the AC sample were being female ($p = .01$) and lower score on hostile sexism subscale of the ASI ($p < .001$).
- Significant predictors for lower IRMA scores in the AC sample were having not received sexual education ($p = .03$), being an athlete ($p = .001$), and lower score on the hostile sexism subscale of the ASI ($p < .001$).

Table 3.

Regression Analysis for the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale Short Form

Predictor	All Data			AC			UVU		
	B	t	p	B	t	P	B	t	p
Constant	2.82	4.69	<.001	2.38	2.59	.01	3.44	3.46	.001
Ambivalent	0.03	0.46	.65	0.04	0.47	.64	0.11	0.76	.45
Fantasy	-0.01	-0.92	.36	0.001	0.08	.94	-0.03	-1.59	.12
Perspective Taking	-0.004	-0.38	.70	0.003	0.22	.83	-0.03	-1.49	.14
Empathic Concern	-0.01	-1.01	.32	-0.01	-0.67	.50	-0.01	-0.34	.73
Personal Distress	0.01	1.39	.17	0.004	0.40	.69	0.03	1.40	.17
Age	-0.03	-1.94	.054	-0.03	-0.70	.49	-0.01	-0.67	.51
Sex Ed	0.12	1.05	.30	-0.02	-0.13	.90	0.59	2.19	.03
Consent Training	-0.05	-0.52	.61	-0.09	-0.79	.43	-0.13	-0.64	.53
Greek Life	0.06	.49	.63	-0.01	-0.05	.96	-	-	-
Athlete	-0.34	-2.65	.01	-0.12	-0.83	.41	-1.03	-3.48	.001
AC	-0.21	-1.64	.10	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	-0.10	-0.96	.34	-0.11	-0.99	.32	0.09	0.40	.69
Female	-0.27	-2.33	.02	-0.38	-2.66	.01	-0.05	-0.24	.81
Hostile	0.37	6.34	<.001	0.34	4.58	<.001	0.44	4.65	<.001

Note: R^2 for all data = .40; for AC = .36; for UVU = .61

- Regression analyses were run to examine identify significant predictors of scores on the hostile subscale of the ASI (see Table 4).
- Significant predictors for lower hostile sexism scores in the full sample were lower scores on ambivalent sexism ($p = .001$), receiving sex ed ($p = .02$), and lower IRMA score ($p < .001$).
- Significant predictors for lower hostile sexism scores in the AC sample were lower scores on ambivalent sexism ($p = .002$), receiving sex ed ($p = .03$), and lower IRMA ($p < .001$).

Results (continued)

- Significant predictors for lower hostile sexism scores in the UVU sample were not being an athlete ($p = .01$) and lower IRMA score ($p < .001$).

Table 4.

Regression Analysis for hostile sexism from the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory

Predictor	All Data			AC			UVU		
	B	t	p	B	t	P	B	t	P
Constant	0.57	0.76	.45	1.75	1.59	.11	-1.93	-1.40	.17
Ambivalent	0.27	3.42	.001	0.27	3.18	.002	0.23	1.23	.23
Fantasy	-0.002	-0.16	.88	-0.003	-0.24	.81	0.01	0.34	.73
Perspective Taking	-0.01	-0.90	.37	-0.03	-2.22	.03	0.04	1.37	.18
Empathic Concern	-0.004	-0.24	.81	0.02	0.92	.36	-0.04	-1.31	.20
Personal Distress	0.0004	-0.04	.97	-0.003	-0.26	.80	-0.001	-0.05	.96
Age	0.02	1.28	.20	-0.02	-0.43	.67	0.02	0.81	.42
Sex Ed	-0.31	-2.34	.02	-0.31	-2.23	.03	-0.35	-1.00	.32
Consent Training	-0.07	-0.54	.59	-0.05	-0.36	.72	0.02	0.09	.93
Greek Life	-0.18	-1.24	.22	-0.16	-1.15	.25	-	-	-
Athlete	0.14	0.93	.35	-0.05	-0.30	.77	1.02	2.58	.01
AC	0.01	0.08	.94	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	0.05	0.40	.69	0.03	0.23	.82	0.01	0.03	.98
Female	-0.08	-0.57	.57	0.04	0.23	.82	-0.22	-0.84	.41
IRMA	.52	6.34	<.001	0.47	4.58	<.001	0.71	4.64	<.001

Note: R^2 for all data = .40, for AC = .40, for UVU = .49

Conclusions

Findings

Although consent training was not a significant predictor for rape myth acceptance or hostile sexism, higher levels of sexism were associated with higher levels of rape myth acceptance and vice versa, suggesting these two constructs feed into each other. None of the empathy scales were significant predictors for IRMA or hostile sexism, but other variables such as participation in athletics and gender were significant. It is not known why some predictors were associated with an increase in one scale and a decrease in the other, such as sex ed and athletics for UVU and more research is needed to further examine this relationship.

Limitations

The most important limitation of the study is the lack of generalizability due to the participant pool being limited to psychology students from each university. Social desirability bias must also be taken into consideration due to the self report nature of the study.

Recommendations

Due to the limitations of the study, recommendations include further research into these constructs across other populations. The significant predictors suggest such constructs are important for rape myth acceptance and could be key to interventions to decrease rape culture.

References

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