Culpable Victims, Good Guys, and Teases: Rape Myth Acceptance and Group Membership at a Small College

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Abstract

Research on rape culture and adherence to rape myths on college campuses remains vital in an era of persistent sexual assault and continually changing expectations for Title IX compliance. Previous research focuses on the prevalence of rape myth adherence, with some researchers arguing that rape myths can be categorized into different types. In this paper, we use survey data to investigate the categorization of rape myths in two respects. First, whether rape myths break down into distinct types, and second, whether particular groups (e.g., athletes, Greeks) tend to believe particular rape myth types. These questions were explored using survey data collected in 2014 on a small college campus in the southern United States. We expected that rape myths would factor into three "types": victim blame (the victim deserved it), victim precipitation (the victim encouraged it), and false accusations (the victim is lying – no rape took place). Instead, different rape myths did emerge, although not quite into the three predicted categories. Instead, myths hung together in the categories of Victim Blame, Victim Precipitation, and Good Guy myths. Moreover, rape myth acceptance also proved to vary by group membership.

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Introduction

Campus climate and rape culture have become buzzwords on campuses since the White House Task Force to Protect Students in 2014 urged campuses to collect data on these issues. Rape Culture surveys typically focus on the incidence and prevalence of sexual assault on campus and the cultural beliefs that support the acceptance of rape. These surveys have found that rape myths are still alive and well on many college campuses. The content of these rape myths has not changed much in many years, although the acceptance rate is low (McMahon 2010; Hinck and Thomas 1999; Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson 1992; Giacopassi and Dull 1986). Rape myths in the 2000s appear similar to what they looked like in the 1980s, with students believing that some women deserve to be raped or provoke their own rape and that women lie about being victims (McMahon 2010; see Burt 1980). However, McMahon and Farmer (2011) argue that rape myth acceptance has become more subtle over time, suggesting that the explicit assertion of rape myths has become more muted while the underlying belief persists.

In recent years, many campuses have instituted Campus Climate Surveys that include questions about rape myths. Rape myths have been defined as "prejudicial, stereotyped or false beliefs about rape, rape victims and rapists, in creating a climate hostile

to rape victims" (Burt 1980: 217), or similarly "attitudes and generally false beliefs about rape that are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women" (Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994:133). The data analyzed here are not part of the institution's formal Campus Climate Survey but rather from an independent survey that is part of a longitudinal, mixed-method research project on rape culture that began in 2004.[1]

This paper utilizes the 2014 survey data[2] to explore rape myth acceptance among students. The present study shows that rape myth acceptance on this campus is down but persists (acceptance of each rape myth in 2014 is down .08-8.4% from the 2009 survey, except for two myths)[3]. This study at a very small institution contributes to the literature significantly because it helps to overcome a bias in previous survey research on rape culture in favor of large universities. This is significant because students are more likely to know each other well at a small college, especially if they are members of a fraternity/sorority or an athletic team. This study further explores whether the trends in the literature hold true at a smaller institution where it is more likely that students have close friendships and strong bonds. A factor analysis indicated that even at this small institution, rape myths are extracted by type and that certain groups believe different rape myths.

Theoretical and Empirical Background

Research shows that rape myth acceptance has been alive and well in the general population (Nyúl et al. 2018; Wilson et al. 2018; Johnson et al. 1997) and to a lesser degree on college campuses (McMahon 2010; Hinck and Thomas 1999; Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson 1992; Giacopassi and Dull 1986). While college students were less likely to subscribe to rape myths, these beliefs have not disappeared. Recent research has shown that adherence to rape myths tended to vary by group statuses such as gender, class rank, membership in a fraternity or sorority, and athletic membership.

Rape Myths and Group Membership

Group membership has been tied to rape myth acceptance for four decades (Reling et al. 2018; McMahon 2010; Burt 1980), and certain types of people were more likely to believe rape myths[4]. Men were more likely to subscribe to rape myths (McMahon 2010; Rich et al. 2010; Newcombe et al. 2008; Hinck and Thomas 1999; Johnson et al. 1997; Mori et al. 1995; Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson 1992), while women were less likely to endorse rape myths (Reling et al. 2018; Canan et al. 2016; Hockett et al. 2016; Aronowitz et al. 2012; Newcombe et al. 2008; Carmody and Washington 2001; Hinck and Thomas 1999; Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson 1992; Giacopassi and Dull 1986). Students involved in athletics were more likely to subscribe to rape myths than non-athletes (Swope 2012; McMahon 2010; Ferro et al. 2008; Murnen and Kholman 2007; Bleecker and Murnen 2005; Sawyer et al. 2002; Hinck and Thomas 1999). Similarly, students who were involved in Greek life were more likely to adhere to rape myths than non-Greek students (Pettit et al. 2017; Canan et al. 2016; Seabrook et al. 2016; Kingree and Thompson 2013; Swope 2012; McMahon 2010; Ferro et al. 2008; Bleeker and Murnen 2005; Hinck and Thomas 1999). The relationship between class rank and rape myth acceptance is less clear. Lee et al. (2010) stated that many studies showed no association between rank or age and rape myth acceptance (Burt 1980 being one of them). Lee et al. (2010) suggested that this lack of effect for class rank may be due to the lack of variation in the sample. However, it also stands to reason that upper-class students have received more education over their college career and might be less likely to endorse rape myths in their junior or senior year. In fact, many have found that rape education reduces rape myth acceptance (Oh and Neville 2004; Black et al. 2000; Hinck and Thomas 1999). In addition, Sawyer et al. (2002) found that students of lower-class rank were more likely to subscribe to rape myths while juniors and seniors scored lower on rape myth acceptance. On the other hand, some studies showed that older students were more tolerant of rape (Dye and Roth 1990; Rich and Sampson 1990). Deming et al. (2013)

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[1] The results of the institution's Campus Climate Survey are not publicly available, and the authors did not have access to them for inclusion in this paper.

[2] This is the most recent data that we have available.

[3] Acceptance of these two rape myths is up from the 2009 survey: "A woman who "teases" men should not complain if they expect to have sex with her" up 1.91% in 2014 and "In the majority of rapes, the

victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation" up .13% in 2014.

[4] Authors vary in their use of words such as "acceptance," "adherence," "endorse," and "subscribe" to indicate how people relate to rape myths. However, there is no systematic difference in their usage. We use the terms interchangeably here.

found that 4th-year students were more likely to blame female victims for their assaults.

Types of Rape Myths

Some research has shown that rape myths can be categorized into types (Martinez et al. 2018; Reiling et al. 2017; McMahon 2010). For instance, Koss et al. (1994) categorized rape myths into "Victim Precipitation" myths that blame the victim for being responsible for the assault or deserving it; "Victim Fabrication" myths that suggest that rape claims are false; and "Victim Masochism" myths that suggest women like physical force during sex (Koss et al. 1994). "Good Guy" myths indicate that at least some men accused of rape are just not capable of it. In addition, "Culpable Victim" myths suggest that women who do not act in a conventionally feminine manner are at fault for "asking for it,"; and "Natural Aggression" myths assert that men's sexual aggression is biological and therefore inevitable. Hinck and Thomas (1999) found that rape myths broke down into seven factors that fell under five categories: victim blame, adherence to sex role stereotypes, justification for rape, misinformation, and communication factors. Belief in these different types of myths varied based on traits such as gender or level of sexual assault awareness training the student had received.

Similarly, Briere et al. (1985) found four factors that varied based on sexual beliefs and sexual experience: disbelief of victim; the victim is responsible; rape report is a manipulation, and rape happens only to certain kinds of women. These types of myths were also linked to attitudes toward bystander intervention. McMahon and Farmer (2011) developed five subscales of the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA) that align with those discussed above: She asked for it, It wasn't rape, He didn't mean to, She lied, and alcohol was to blame (i.e., perpetrator drunkenness excuses his behavior) (see also McMahon 2010).

While these rape myth typologies vary somewhat in number and terminology, they mostly converge on a core set of findings. Rape myths as described in the literature center on women being responsible for their rape (e.g., victim precipitation, culpable victim, victim blame); women were making false accusations (e.g., victim fabrication, rape report is a manipulation, she lied); they claim that it wasn't really rape (e.g., she was asking for it, victim masochism); the assertion that men are blameless (e.g., he's not capable of it, he didn't mean to do it, natural aggression, perpetrator drunkenness).

Both Reling et al. (2018) and McMahon and Farmer (2011) argued that rape myth acceptance is declining and becoming less overt. Myth types have tended to fall into fewer categories over time as some have dropped out of favor. While some of these have been primarily debunked (e.g., rape is trivial, and women like to be raped), others have maintained their cultural prevalence, including Victim Precipitation and the notion that false allegations are common (McMahon and Farmer 2011). McMahon and Farmer noted that as more high school and college students participated in some form of rape prevention education, they exhibited a lower level of rape myth adherence. But this was primarily the case when rape myths were phrased in language that overtly defies social acceptability, such as blatant victim-blaming. But, then, this change may be more of an artifact of going through a rape prevention program and learning a new discourse than a more profound shift in attitude. The authors asserted that when rape myths were phrased in more subtle ways that mask the sexism behind them, rape myth acceptance remained higher. So, while blaming the victim was a flag respondents learned to avoid, the more nuanced idea that intoxication mitigates the perpetrator's accountability is not (McMahon and Farmer 2011).

To a lesser extent, research has shown that subscribing to different types of myths can vary by social location, such as gender and group membership. For instance, Johnson et al. (1997) found that men were more likely to believe myths excused the man versus blaming the woman. Moreover, Rich et al. (2010) found that many men blamed the victim for wearing provocative clothing. Athletes have endorsed the victim blame myth type more than non-athletes (McMahon 2010). Those affiliated with Greek life subscribed more to the Good Guy type of myths (Martinez et al. 2018; McMahon 2010). In a study focusing on perpetrator myths, Martinez et al. (2018) found that fraternity men were more likely to believe Good Guy myths than non-Greek men. Still, no statistically significant difference was found between sorority and non-Greek women.

The Current Study

Building on the existing literature on rape myths and campus sexual assault, the current study is intended to probe further whether rape myths can be categorized into discernable types. Extending previous research into the correlation between myth and group identification, we investigate the relative degree of rape myth acceptance between women and men, Greeks and non-Greeks, athletes and non-athletes, and among different class ranks.

Methods and Data

This paper is based on data collected at a small Southern liberal arts college in 2014 as part of a longitudinal, mixed-methods project that administered surveys at five-year intervals between 2004 and 2019. In each data collection period, semi-structured interviews were conducted, supplemented in some years by separate male and female focus groups. The main objective of this project is to assess the prevalence of sexual assault, beliefs about rape and acceptance of rape myths, bystander intervention behavior, and the culture of rape on a small college campus.

Data Collection

The survey was first constructed in 2004, then revised for an internally funded undergraduate research project in 2009 and revised in 2014 and subsequently in 2019 for distribution to the student body. The 2014 survey data are utilized for this paper. Changes in each iteration were kept to a minimum to compare over time. For instance, in 2014, some questions were slightly reworded for clarity, questions concerning bystander intervention were added, and a section on sexual harassment was dropped to keep the length more manageable. The survey was administered electronically and included an Informed Consent and links to resources on and off-campus if the survey was triggering for some students. The entire student body was emailed a link to a Survey Monkey survey with a letter of explanation about the purpose and goals of the survey.

Sample

While the entire student body was emailed the survey link, we also relied on a pseudo-convenience sampling strategy. Several student leaders and faculty were emailed and asked to encourage and remind students to respond to the survey. In 2014, this sampling strategy produced a 17.9% response rate which was down slightly from a 22.2% response rate in 2009 and up from 2004 (8%), when paper surveys were distributed by mail, possibly explaining the low response rate. The 2014 sample was 232 of 1295 students. However, missing data were prevalent, although seemingly at random[5]. Table 1 includes the demographics of the full sample and the sample after a Listwise Case Deletion was performed, reducing the sample size to 130.

It is important to note that the majority of the sample is white (86.6%), female (80.6%), and non-athlete (72.5%). Almost equal numbers are involved in Greek life (44.8%) and non-affiliated (55.2%). The sample is fairly evenly distributed over class rank but has higher percentages of first-year (28.3%) and senior students (27.8%) than sophomore (20.0%) and junior (20.9%). In 2014 (n=232), 59 (26.1%) students reported having experienced a sexual assault which was up from 34 (17.9%) in 2009 (n=212), and from 7 (7.9%) in 2004 (n=89). Rape victimization was reported by 22 (16.7%) students in 2014, by 12 (6.2%) in 2009, and by 5 (5.6%) in 2004.

Measures and Variables

Rape myths were articulated in the survey using modified versions of select statements from the widely respected Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA). In addition, we enlisted various students to help us reword some of the myths slightly to better capture the culture at this particular institution. Table 2 lists the rape myth statements used in this analysis. In the survey, if sex is explicit in the rape myth statement, it usually states or implies a female victim and male perpetrator. Sexual assault was defined in the survey as physical contact of a sexual nature, against one's will or without one's consent. Rape was defined as sexual contact coerced through force, threats, intimidation, or with someone unconscious or incapable of giving consent (being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, etc.).

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[5] The missing data are a bit of a mystery. It appears as though some students just stopped answering (the length of the survey may be too much for some). Most who did not answer the rape myth questions appear to have stopped answering at the question, "have you ever experienced a sexual assault on campus". Students may have quit the survey at that point for any number of reasons (e.g., the topic may be too much for some or not of interest to others). Of those who did not answer the rape myth questions, only 17 said that they *had* experienced a sexual assault on campus. The others either reported that they did not experience an assault or did not answer that question at all. A much smaller percentage seemed to answer most of the questions up to the rape myths, but did not continue beyond that. The analysis was conducted with both listwise deletion and missing replaced with mean but we felt that listwise case deletion was truer to the data as those cases simply had no data pertaining to the rape myth questions.

Table 1. Demographic Information for Full Sample and Sample after Listwise Case Deletion of Missing Data

	Number: full sample	Percent of total sample	Number: minus missing	Percent of sample minus missing
Sample	232	232	130	130
Gender				
Male	45	19.4	17	13.1
Female	187	80.6	113	86.9
Class Rank				
First year	65	28.3	31	23.9
Sophomore	46	20.0	26	20
Junior	48	20.9	31	23.8
Senior	64	27.8	38	29.2
Greek membership				
Greek	105	45.3	56	43.1
Non-Greek	127	54.7	74	56.9
Athletic Status				
Athlete	66	28.4	36	27.7
Non-Athlete	166	71.6	94	72.3
Race				
White	200	86.6	114	87.7
Black	14	6.1	9	3.9
Asian	4	1.7	1	.8
Latino	3	1.3	1	.8
Other	10	4.3	5	3.8

Table 2: List of Rape Myths with Mean and Standard Deviation

Rape Myth Statements. Responses ranged from (1) Strongly Disagree to 5) Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
If a man pays for everything on a date, it's reasonable to expect the woman to reciprocate by having sex	1.200	.487
If a woman gets drunk or high and has a "one-night stand", she is "fair game" for other men	1.285	.613
A woman who goes to the dorm room or home of a man implies that she is willing to have sex	1.400	.700
If a woman "hooks up" with a man, then it's no big deal if he goes a little further and has sex with her.	1.415	.691
If a woman "hooks up" with a man and she lets things get out of hand, it is her own fault if her partner forces sex on her	1.354	.621
If a woman has had previous sex with a man, she cannot claim that she was raped if the same man has sex with her again	1.392	.699
Although most women wouldn't admit it, they generally like being physically forced to have sex	1.267	.591
A woman who dresses provocatively is at least somewhat responsible if she is raped	1.239	.595
A woman who "teases" men should not complain if they expect to have sex with her	1.477	.837
A lot of women lead men on and then claim they were raped	.685	.915
Rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at men	1.846	1.007
A woman who is raped while she is drunk or high is at least somewhat responsible for the rape	1.531	.809

When a woman is raped, it is often because the way they said "no" was unclear	1.800	.999
If a woman doesn't physically fight back, you can't say that it was rape	1.292	.535
If a woman gets drunk and goes to a man's room and then says the next morning that she was raped, it is because she just regrets having sex	1.685	.949
Most rapes and sexual assaults are committed by strangers	1.785	.757
Men from middle class homes almost never rape	1.669	.741
Men don't usually intend to force sex on a woman, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away	2.231	1.110
In the majority of rapes, the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation	1.569	.871

Sex was measured by a question asking respondents to indicate their sex as either male, female, or other (the other category asked respondents to "please specify"). Athletic status was measured by asking respondents to select either "I am a current or former member of a R-MC sports team, or I plan on becoming a member of a R-MC sports team" or "I do not plan on becoming a member of a R-MC sports team." Class rank was determined by asking students to report whether they were a freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior. Another class rank variable was created by collapsing freshman and sophomore into "newer students" and junior and senior into "older students." Finally, respondents indicated Greek affiliation by choosing either, "I am a current or former member of a fraternity/sorority, or I plan on becoming a member of a fraternity/sorority" or "I do not plan on becoming a member of a fraternity/sorority."

Hypotheses and Data Analysis

Data analysis began by separating the myths into types using Principal Components Factor Analysis with a Varimax Rotation (See Appendix A for how the myths factored). Rape myth statements loaded together were used to create rape myth-type scale variables. Finally, Cronbach's Alpha was employed to check the reliability of the scales.

The factor analysis revealed three types of myths, Victim Blame, Good guy, and Victim Precipitation (discussed in the Findings section below and Appendix A). Once the factor analysis revealed the types, the following hypotheses were developed based on the past literature and prior research.

H1: Men will be more likely than women to believe the Victim Blame myth types.
H2: Athletes will be more likely than non-athletes to believe the Good Guy myth type.
H3: Newer students will be more likely to believe Victim Precipitation myths than juniors and seniors.

H4: Greek-affiliated students will be more likely to believe Victim Blame myths than non-Greek students.

Next, T-tests were used to test the above hypotheses. Finally, the T-test analysis was used to investigate whether different groups were more likely to believe various myths.

Results

We hypothesized that rape myth statements would load together by type based on the literature discussed above. We wanted to explore how these statements would be associated and conjectured that they might load into three factors: Victim Blame, Victim Precipitation, and False Accusation Myths. We expected that Victim Blame myths would be those statements in which the victim deserves the sexual assault because of their personal history or behavior (e.g., promiscuous, has had a one-night stand, drinks alcohol). We thought Victim Precipitated Myths would imply that the victim's behavior drove the perpetrator to the act (e.g., victim teased him; dressed provocatively; led him on; had prior sex with the perpetrator). Finally, we thought that myths that accuse the victim of lying about the assault would factor together (e.g., the victim had consensual sex but regretted it later; the victim is claiming rape to get revenge). However, as explained below, the factor analysis results did not align with our assumptions. Instead, a "Good Guy Myth" (as seen in research by Reling et al. 2018) emerged, which included statements suggesting that certain men don't rape or excuse their behavior (e.g., middle-class men don't rape; rape is a stranger act, and good men sometimes get carried away). Also, the victim blame and victim precipitated factors were not as distinct as we expected.

However, a Factor Analysis revealed that rape myths did load by type (using an Eigenvalue of over 1). Three factors emerged that we categorized as Victim Blame, Victim Precipitation, and Good Guy

myths (see Appendix A). The factor loadings for the Victim Blame myth ranged from .609 to .828. For the Victim Precipitation myth type, the loadings ranged from .509 to .755. Finally, factor loadings for the Good Guy myth type ranged from .455 to .741 (but this was only a 4-item scale).

These factor-based scores were then used to create three rape myth type scales, and a Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the internal validity of each (alpha ranged from .69-.91 and is reported in Appendix A). The victim-blame included statements like the victim let man pay; had one-night stand prior; went to the dorm room; got drunk and hooked up; had prior sex with the perpetrator; and women like force. In other words, this type implies that the victim is responsible because of her past behavior or her actions that night. The Victim Precipitation myth type included statements indicating that it is the victim's fault for miscommunicating or lying (e.g., dresses provocatively; teases men; leads man on; the victim was drunk so somewhat responsible; the "no" was unclear; victim didn't fight; rape claim is regret over consensual sex, and rape claim is revenge). Mostly, the statements that loaded together here imply that the victim encouraged the rape by teasing, leading on, or not resisting enough. Finally, the Good Guy myth type included statements that excused the man or indicated that it is implausible that certain men could be rapists (e.g., most rapists are strangers; middle-class men don't rape; campus rapes are men who get a little carried away; the victim had a bad reputation).

As mentioned above, after the factor analysis revealed these three types, the following hypotheses were developed using past literature and our previous interview and focus group data. It is important to note that most of these students disagreed or strongly disagreed with all rape myths. However, correlation analyses indicated that gender was associated with rape myth adherence by type (although slightly so). Males were more likely to believe all three myth types. These analyses indicated that males are more likely than females to consider the Victim Blame (.207; p=.018), Victim Precipitation (279; p=.001), and Good Guy myth (.205; p=.020) type.

Athletic status was also correlated with both Victim Precipitation myths and Good-Guy myths. Sports participation was correlated with athletes having slightly more acceptance of the Good Guy myth type (.257; p=.003) and the Victim Precipitated myth (.288; p=.001). Surprisingly, neither Greek affiliation nor class rank (defined as upper or lower) was correlated with any of the three myths. As can be seen above, the strongest correlations (although still weak) exist between the Victim Precipitation myths, sports, and gender. In other words, athletes and males disagreed less with statements that the victim's behavior was responsible for the sexual assault (at least in part).

T-tests were utilized to analyze these group differences further to explore significant differences between various groups in adherence to the three types of rape myths. These T-tests indicated substantial differences in males and females on the three types of myths.

Victim Blame

This myth type included statements to the effect of she let the man pay; had one-night stand prior; went to room; hooked up while drunk; prior sex with the perpetrator; women like force. Additionally, this myth suggests that the woman deserved the assault because of her past or current behavior, such as having a one-night stand, going to the perpetrator's dorm room, letting the man pay, or hooking up with the perpetrator.

T-test analyses showed a significant difference between males and females on their belief in this myth. On average, men have a higher acceptance rate of the Victim Blame myth type than women, with a mean of 15.24 compared to 12.15 (t(2.395); df=128; p=.018). However, there is no statistical difference in belief in the Victim Blame myth type based on participation in Greek life, athletics, or class rank.

Victim Precipitated

The statements that loaded together in this factor included: victim dresses provocatively; teases; leads man on; rape claim is revenge; the victim was drunk so somewhat responsible; "no" was unclear; victim didn't fight; rape claim indicates regret over consensual sex. This myth type suggests that the victim provokes the assault by leading the man on, dressing suggestively, drinking, or teasing, and does not resist verbally or physically.

T-tests showed a significant difference between males and females on their belief in this myth. On average, men have a higher acceptance rate of the Victim Precipitation myth type than women, with a mean of 11.88 compared to 8.92 (t(2.400); df=18.069; p=.027).

In addition, athletes are more accepting of this myth type than non-athletes (t(3.05); df=52.017; p=.004). Athletes (mean=10.97) were more likely to adhere to these types of myths than non-athletes (mean=8.67). Again, there was no significant difference between Greek and non-Greek or class rank for this myth type.

Good Guy Myth

The Good Guy myth consists of statements such as: most rapists are strangers; middle-class men don't rape; campus rapes are men who get a little carried away; the victim had a bad reputation. The Good-Guy myth type tends to imply that college students are good people and likely not rapists at all. If they are accused, the victim probably has a bad reputation, and/or the accused didn't mean to do it. He just got carried away. Again, a T-test showed a significant difference between males and females on their belief in this myth. On average, men have a higher acceptance rate of the Good Guy myth type than women, with a mean of 8.59 compared to 7.05 (t(2.364); df=128; p=.020).

Similarly, athletes are more likely to agree with the Good Guy myth than non-athletes. T-tests showed a significant difference (t(2.721); df=52.886; p=.003) between athletes and non-athletes in that athletes (mean=8.31) were more likely to demonstrate adherence to these types of myths than non-athletes (mean=6.85). However, there is no statistical difference between Greek and non-Greek in belief in the Good Guy myth type or class rank.

Conclusion and Discussion

Overall, several hypotheses were supported. First, our exploratory hypothesis that myths could be categorized into types was affirmed, although not exactly as we had envisioned. Three types of rape myths emerged: (1) those that blame the victim for her previous sexual behavior or actions during the assault (Victim Blame); (2) those that assume the victim provoked the assault or led on the perpetrator or failed to resist (Victim Precipitated); and (3) those that assume that certain types of men either would not rape or get pushed too far by seductive women (Good Guy Myth).

These data supported two other hypotheses. First, men are more likely than women to believe the Victim Blame myth type, and athletes are more likely than non-athletes to believe the Good Guy myth. Both males and athletes are more likely to believe the Victim Precipitated myth type. The highest correlation was found in athletic status and Victim Precipitated myth type. This correlation was higher than found in the association between being an athlete and acceptance of the Good Guy myth.

Surprisingly, participation in Greek life and class rank were not correlated with the type of myth. This was a bit shocking but could be explained by better training. Greeks are required to attend sexual assault training on this campus. However, athletes are mandated to get training as well. Perhaps, training in the sororities is more salient to that group who are also

mostly female in this sample. Maybe the training is more salient to this population than to athletes (even female athletes). In other words, maybe Greek life is not correlated with type of myth because the training really resonates with females in Greek life. Maybe they see themselves as particularly vulnerable to sexual assault compared to female athletes and thus, the training they receive is more effective. Whatever the explanation, this finding does seem to conflict with most of the literature and warrants further exploration perhaps by comparing focus groups with sorority/fraternity members and athletes in the next iteration of the study.

Lastly, it is important to remember that rape myth adherence among college students tends to be low overall (McMahon 2010; Hinck and Thomas 1999; Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson 1992; Giacopassi and Dull 1986). Nonetheless, the implications of accepting rape myths can be dire. Those with higher rape myth acceptance are less likely to intervene (McMahon 2010), less likely to see perpetrators as culpable (Klement et al 2019), and more likely to commit an assault (Seabrook et al. 2018; Murnen and Kohlman 2007; Koss et al. 1985).

While the patterns found in this study are troubling (athletes and men have higher acceptance of certain types of myths), it is still promising that in this sample rape myth acceptance was both low and trending downward over time. This institution has worked to provide training in prevention and awareness and to improve response to reports, especially since 2009. The cause of the decrease in rape myth adherence is beyond the scope of the quantitative part of this study, but one can hope that changes in our education and response since 2009 have played some role in the decrease in rape myth acceptance.

Policy Implications

This analysis illustrated that at this small institution, various groups of students believe different types of rape myths. This suggests that targeted training would be effective in dismantling rape myth adherence, with potential impact on rates of sexual assault. This was suggested by McMahon (2010) who found similar results in her analysis and advocated for separate training based on group membership. Similarly, in other research, training effectiveness was found to be dependent on gender of the audience and the presenter, as well as the content (Anderson and Whiston 2005). More innovation and research on training are clearly warranted in light of these findings. Targeted training could be designed to address directly the type of rape myth most prevalent within the particular population.

At this institution the findings indicate how targeted training could be designed for men and for athletes. Men were more likely to believe the Victim Blame myth type. This type of myth included sentiments like: if a man pays, he can expect sex; if a woman goes to the home of a man, she is willing to have sex; if a woman engages in any type of sexual activity with a man, it implies he can expect sex with her; and if a woman allows any type of sexual contact to get out of hand, it is her fault if her partner uses force. Training could be targeted to address directly these beliefs. Moreover, training focused on the issue of consent would be particularly appropriate for those who subscribe to these myths. This could include discussion of how to gain affirmative consent, and how to check in with one's partner frequently to confirm consent at different stages of the sexual encounter.

Males in general and athletes in particular were more likely to buy into the Victim Precipitated type of myth, which includes the belief that the victim brought on the attack. This type includes statements along the lines of a woman is asking for it if she dresses provocatively, teases, leads her partner on, is drunk or high, didn't fight back, or she did not clearly communicate that she did not consent. These types of myths suggest that the victims' actions caused the attack. In this case training that addresses consent and respecting others' bodies, patriarchal structure/culture, and bystander training would be warranted. First, targeted training could include discussions about consent, gaining affirmative consent for each sexual activity, and frequent check-ins with sexual partners. Second, this type of training could interrogate the patriarchal nature of our society that perpetuates sexist beliefs that tend to place the onus of victimization on women or a subjugated group. For instance, women are taught to avoid victimization, but men are not usually taught how to avoid becoming a perpetrator of sexual violence. Educating men in general and male athletes in particular about this tendency to victim-blame would be a step in the right direction. Scenarios featuring men as victims may be particularly valuable in this type of training because they challenge men to re-think the presumption that victims precipitate their own assaults. Third, for the victim precipitated myths, bystander training might be useful. Bystander training teaches students to recognize and interrupt interactions that look problematic. This type of training suggests to students that they need to intervene either on behalf of the potential victim or on the behalf of a friend who may be instigating a sexual encounter without consent. Bystander intervention can work whether it is motivated by men's socialization to be protective over women, or by a man's desire to protect a friend from an accusation of sexual assault. In either case, the training would steer men away from perceiving the situation as a victim-precipitated sexual assault. This may be particularly salient to athletes who might feel good about looking out for their teammates.

Athletes were also more likely to believe the Good Guy myth. The Good Guy myth included statements such as: middle-class men don't rape, most rapes are committed by strangers, most victims are promiscuous, and he didn't mean to do it/just got carried away. The training for the Good Guy myth should highlight basic statistics about rape and sexual assault (e.g., perpetrators come from all socioeconomic backgrounds, most know their victims, false accusations are rare, etc.). Again, education about the patriarchal notions that underly these assumptions may be valuable. Fundamentally, the message of this training should illustrate how the Good Guy myth protects male perpetrators at the expense of female victims and how these myths reflect larger patriarchal norms in the society.

Targeted training in rape myth awareness for administrators who work directly with particular student populations could also prove worthwhile. For instance, the Title IX Coordinator could require specialized trainings for the athletic director, coaches, and student life staff members. These would include the information about the types of rape myths various groups tend to believe and how to combat them. Because these administrators form strong relationships with students at a small institution like ours, they could become effective communicators regarding rape myth awareness and sexual assault prevention.

Our findings suggest only tentative recommendations for targeted training based on patterns of rape myth acceptance. Clearly, such trainings cannot overcome years of socialization in a patriarchal society that promotes rape myths as a common filter through which to understand sexual assault. But the potential to use rape myth research to improve sexual assault awareness training is significant.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is unique in that the survey data were collected on a very small liberal arts campus. The results are intriguing, in part, because chief findings in the literature were confirmed in some ways but defied in others. Men and athletes were more likely to believe some myth types, but Greek-affiliated students and students in lower class ranks were not. This could be due to the type of institution or size of the campus and warrants further investigation using qualitative methods to explore why certain types of myths persist, while others see their prevalence fade. Future research should be conducted, by ourselves and others, in an

attempt to replicate these findings, especially at larger institutions and among additional types of student groups to see if the patterns identified here are generalizable.

To this end, further analyses will include an investigation of which types of rape myths are present among various groups in the 2019 data. Also, an exploration of interaction effects between gender and Greek status, or gender and athletic status, etc. would be of interest (see Martinez et al. 2018). Further, a deeper investigation of the longitudinal changes between 2004 and 2019 would help identify larger patterns of rape myth persistence and decline. In fact, these longitudinal data provide a wealth of possibilities for future projects investigating rape myth persistence or desistence. In addition, mixed methods approaches will be incorporated in future analyses. Comparing the quantitative findings to the qualitative data will offer more robust interpretations of patterns and trends concerning rape myth adherence among students, group membership, and the types of myths to which they subscribe.

While this study produced interesting findings, there are several limitations as well. While the size of the institution limits the sample size significantly, the sample was still over one hundred cases, so the sample size is of minimal concern. The comparatively low response rate of male students, however, is a potentially more significant limitation. Missing data within many of the surveys was also of serious concern. A large portion of those who began the survey appeared to have stopped answering at different, but relatively early, stages. An analysis of the missing data did not reveal a discernable pattern except that those who had experienced an assault (very few cases) were more likely to complete the survey. It appears that many students simply quit the survey, perhaps due to the length or the content.

Lastly, our pseudo-convenience sampling strategy (asking trusted colleagues to encourage students to take the survey), as well as the topic of the survey, produced a sample that was largely female and probably largely social science students (who are more likely than other students to have had courses on related topics). In future iterations, a similar strategy will be employed to widen the net significantly, reaching out to more colleagues, coaches, and student athletes to spread the word about the survey.

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Appendix A. Factored Rape Myth Statements (n=130)

Factor 1: Victim Blame Cronbach's Alpha: .88	Factor 2: Victim Precipitation Cronbach's Alpha: .91	Factor 3: Good Guy Cronbach's Alpha: .69
If a man pays for everything on a date, it's reasonable to expect the woman to reciprocate by having sex	A woman who dresses provocatively is at least somewhat responsible if she is raped	Most rapes and sexual assaults are committed by strangers
If a woman gets drunk or high and has a "one-night stand", she is "fair game" for other men	A woman who "teases" men should not complain if they expect to have sex with her	Men from middle class homes almost never rape
A woman who goes to the dorm room or home of a man implies that she is willing to have sex	A lot of women lead men on and then claim they were raped	Men don't usually intend to force sex on a woman, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away
If a woman "hooks up" with a man, then it's no big deal if he goes a little further and has sex with her.	Rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at men	In the majority of rapes, the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation
If a woman "hooks up" with a man and she lets things get out of hand, it is her own fault if her partner forces sex on her	A woman who is raped while she is drunk or high is at least somewhat responsible for the rape	
If a woman has had previous sex with a man, she cannot claim that she was raped if the same man has sex with her again	When a woman is raped, it is often because the way they said "no" was unclear	
Although most women wouldn't admit it, they generally like being physically forced to have sex	If a woman doesn't physically fight back, you can't say that it was rape	
	If a woman gets drunk and goes to a man's room and then says the next morning that she was raped, it is because she just regrets having sex	