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# Mechanisms for the Association between Traditional Masculine Ideologies and Rape Myth Acceptance among College Men

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Mechanisms for the Relationship between Traditional Masculine Ideologies and  
Rape Myth Acceptance among College Men

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### Abstract

We explored mechanisms for the relationship between traditional masculine ideologies and rape myth acceptance. We hypothesized that locus of control would serve as a mediator for victim precipitation rape myths, while negative attitudes toward women would serve as a mediator for victim masochism and victim fabrication rape myths. Using a sample of 100 male college students, the results indicated that negative attitudes toward women mediated the relationship between traditional masculine ideologies and all three types of rape myths, but locus of control did not serve as a mediator for any. Implications and directions for future research are discussed.

*Keywords:* rape myths, attitudes toward women, masculine ideologies

Mechanisms for the Relationship Between Traditional Masculine Ideologies and Rape Myth  
Acceptance among College Men

Rates of sexual assault are alarmingly high. For instance, recent data from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NIPSV, 2010) indicates that, of their sample of over 9,000 women, one in five women reported having been raped during their lifetime, and one in two women reported having experienced other forms of sexual violence (e.g., sexual coercion or unwanted sexual contact). Moreover, other research indicates that during the discrete period of their college years, one in eight women are raped (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Thus, rape on college campuses is an important problem to attempt to understand and address for researchers, counselors, and administrators alike.

Not only is rape quite prevalent, but so are the rape *myths* that often underlie one's motive to rape (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Rape myths are "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists" and serve as a justification for one's decision to rape (Burt, 1980, p. 217). These myths perpetuate society's lack of recognition of the many different relationships in which rape can occur (e.g., stranger rape and marital rape) and the severity of rape. Rape myths allow victims of rape to be viewed as deserving of this violent treatment (Hammond, Berry, & Rodriguez, 2011) and may affect victims' willingness to report the crime (Egan & Wilson, 2012).

In the current study, we investigated predictors of rape myth acceptance among male college students. Specifically, we attempted to identify mechanisms for the observed association between traditional masculine ideologies and rape myth endorsement. Traditional masculine ideologies is a concept that stems from a social constructionist view on gender and refers to the degree to which a man personally embraces traditional societal definitions of being a man (Pleck,

Sonenstein, & Ku, 1993). The concept of masculine ideologies is distinct from biological sex in that men vary in the degree to which they embrace traditional societal definitions of being a man.

### **Types of Rape Myths and Prevalence of Acceptance**

Koss, Heise, and Russo (1994) asserted that rape myths can be subsumed under three main categories: victim precipitation, victim masochism, and victim fabrication. People who subscribe to the myth of victim precipitation believe that women who are raped often provoke the sexual assault (e.g., due to their choice of clothing) or that rape only happens to certain types of women (e.g., women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds). Victim masochism refers to the myth that women secretly enjoy rape. Victim fabrication refers to the myth that women lie and/or exaggerate about the severity of the rape incident (e.g., women make false reports for revenge). This myth also encompasses the belief that men are justified in raping women or are not responsible for unanticipated results.

A literature review by Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) indicated that a substantial minority of people endorse rape myths, with 25 to 34% of participants agreeing with the majority of statements on standard self-report questionnaires assessing these myths. Although it has been argued that rates of rape myth endorsement are decreasing over time, others have pointed out that these myths might simply be becoming more subtle and difficult to assess with self-report measures (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). Further, certain groups of people have been found to endorse these attitudes more than others. Research consistently indicates that men endorse rape myths more frequently than women (e.g., McMahon, 2010). Some research also suggests that fraternity/sorority pledges and athletes are more likely to endorse rape myths than other college students (Bleecker & Murnen, 2005). Unfortunately, studies also have demonstrated that rape myth endorsement is high among the very people who are in a unique position to help rape

victims, police officers (Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2012; Page, 2008). For example, Page (2008) found that 65% of police officers reported female rape victims to have a bad reputation or to be promiscuous, while 79% said women secretly wish to be raped.

### **Effects of Rape Myth Acceptance**

The possible effects of rape myth acceptance have been studied in mock jurors, accused rapists, and victims themselves (Krahé & Beger, 2009). The results from mock jury decision making studies reveal a positive association between rape myths and assignment of blame to the victim, such that participants who score high on rape myth measures are more likely to assign blame to the accuser than participants who score low on rape myth measures (Eyssel & Bohner, 2011; Hammond, Berry, & Rodriguez, 2011). Also, men who rape are more likely to endorse rape myths than men without such histories (Begany & Milburn, 2002; Bohner, Jarvis, Eyssel, & Siebler, 2005).

The omnipresence of rape myths may lead women to be hesitant, and even fearful, of reporting their rape incident, as rape is still a negative stigma for victims (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011). The portrayal of the stereotypic rape perpetrated on the “perfect victim” through the media may serve to downplay the occurrence of rape, thereby decreasing the probability of women defining a personal experience of rape as such and of reporting the crime. Consistent with this speculation is research indicating that rape victims who have high levels of rape myth acceptance are less likely to report the crime they experienced than victims who have low levels of rape myth acceptance (Egan & Wilson, 2012).

### **Predictors of Rape Myth Acceptance**

Because rape myths are prevalent and potentially lead to many negative outcomes for rape victims, it is necessary to understand *why* people hold these beliefs about rape and rape

victims. Some of the numerous empirically identified predictors of rape myth acceptance include a belief in the just world hypothesis (i.e., the commonly held belief that we live in a world where most believe that people get what they deserve. Lambert & Raichle, 2000), problem drinking (Locke & Mahalik, 2005), possession of authoritarian personality traits (Begany & Milburn, 2002), and amount of time spent watching television (Kahlor & Eastin, 2011). The two factors that have been central to the understanding of rape myth acceptance, and therefore, were the focus of the current study are traditional masculine ideologies and locus of control.

***Traditional Masculine Ideologies.*** Traditional masculine ideologies is a frequently examined predictor of rape myth acceptance (Murnen, Wright, & Kaluzny, 2002). Such ideologies are thought to often influence men's close relationships negatively. For instance, these ideologies potentially lead to sexual aggression or a need for dominance (Pleck et al., 1993). While there is some overlap between masculinity and traditional masculine ideologies, especially on the extremes, these two concepts are thought to be distinct. Specifically, the term masculinity comes from a trait perspective and focuses on the possession of so-called "gendered personality traits," such as instrumentality, and does not necessarily appear to be correlated with aggression toward women (Pleck et al., 1993). In contrast, the term traditional masculine ideologies is more of a set of attitudes rather than traits, such that men high in this variable endorse the belief that they and other men should have certain characteristics culturally prescribed to their gender.

Thompson and Pleck (1986) developed a measure of traditional masculine ideologies, the Male Role Norm Scale (MRNS), based on three of Kilmartin's (2000) four themes of masculinity: antifemininity ("no sissy stuff"), status and achievement ("big wheel"), and

independence ("sturdy oak"). The MRNS is distinct from many measures of traditional masculine ideologies and related constructs, such as hostile masculinity and hyper-masculinity, in that the measure does not assess negative attitudes toward women or gender relations in general. In the current study, we used Pleck's measure and conceptualization of traditional masculine ideology. Thus, in the remainder of this paper, when we refer to a study using a different measure of conceptualization, we will specifically make note of this.

While Kilmartin's themes of masculine ideology do not necessarily imply negative attitudes towards women or violence toward women, the theme of the importance of status could imply the use of social power, functioning to oppress women and maintain patriarchy through sexism and the instillation of fear (O'Neil & Egan, 1993). Rape is thought to be one specific method of social control through which this fear is instilled (Sheffield, 1995). Moreover, teaching men to be autonomous and unemotional may predispose them to be less empathic to the suffering of others. Coupled with instruction to reject so-called feminine traits in themselves, this may contribute to a general disdain of women, thereby increasing the likelihood of violence against women. That is, men who embrace traditional ideologies may behave in a tough or callous out of fear of being perceived as feminine or weak.

Men with traditional masculine ideologies have been found to attribute more blame to female victims of sexual assault than men with more egalitarian views (e.g., White & Robinson Kurpius, 2002). Related, Davies, Gilston, and Rogers (2012) found that rape myth acceptance among college men was positively correlated with the possession of negative gender role stereotypes. In addition, White and Robison Kurpius (2002) found that female participants who held traditional feminine values, and the idea that men need to be strong and independent, tended to attribute more blame to rape victims than women who did not hold such traditional gender



beliefs. The results of a study by Locke and Mahalik (2005) also indicated that men who conform to specific masculine norms were more likely than men who didn't to engage in sexually aggressive behavior than men who didn't. However, it is important to note that unlike the MRNS, the measure used in Locke and Mahalik's study explicitly assesses a value of violence and power over women.

Pleck (1995) developed a model explaining sexually dysfunctional, hyper-masculine behaviors (e.g., sexual aggression and/or violence against women in intimate relationships, womanizing tendencies, infidelity, etc.) as a product of conflicting male roles (Pleck, 1995). He believed that the male ideological roles that are expected in our society often negatively affect romantic relationships, careers, family relationships, and one's own masculine self-concept. Pleck (1995) termed this negative effect of masculine ideology *gender role strain*. This occurs when gender role demands lead to negative effects for the individual or for others around that person. These demands conflict with one's personal reactions in a given situation. For example, men in Western culture are taught to be unemotional, which could have a very negative effect on a man who has a personal tendency to become emotional, possibly leading to guilt, depression or high blood pressure (Kilmartin, 2000). In support of this view, Jakupcak, Lisak, and Roemer (2002) conducted a study using 165 male participants from an urban university focusing on how masculine ideology and gender role strain are related to sexually aggressive thoughts and behaviors toward women. Their results showed that men who held highly traditional masculine ideologies and high levels of gender role strain were at higher risk for exhibiting violent behavior toward their significant other and for holding rape accepting attitudes.

***Locus of Control.*** Some studies also suggest that one's adherence to rape myths may partly depend on one's locus of control. Research demonstrates that men who hold traditional

gender role definitions are more likely to display an internal locus of control than males who hold more egalitarian gender views (Furnham & Karani, 1985). An internal locus of control has also been found to be related to masculinity, a concept that is distinct from, but often tied to, traditional gender role values (Lengua & Stormshak, 2000). Presumably, this relationship between locus of control and traditional masculine ideologies may exist because men who view themselves as powerful, strong, and independent are more likely to believe that they are in control of their own rewards and consequences.

An internal locus of control has also been found to be positively related to rape myth acceptance (Thornton, Robbins, & Johnson, 1981). This relationship may exist because individuals who believe that people are in control of their own rewards and consequences are more likely to believe that a woman could have avoided the rape situation. Interestingly, a study by Egan and Wilson (2012) revealed that rape victims themselves who possess an internal locus of control are more likely to endorse rape myths than rape victims with an external locus of control.

### **The Current Study**

As stated above, several studies suggest a link between traditional masculine ideologies and rape myth acceptance (Jakupcak et al. 2002; Locke & Mahalik, 2005; Robinson & Kurpius, 2002). What remains unclear is what accounts for this link. That is, what is the mechanism for the relationship between these two variables? Because studies have found that locus of control, traditional masculine ideologies, and rape myth acceptance are all related to each other, one might speculate that locus of control mediates the association between traditional masculine ideologies and rape myth acceptance.

Alternatively, the mechanism for the relationship between rape myth acceptance and masculine ideologies may vary as a function of the specific type of rape myth one is examining.

For instance, locus of control may be the mechanism by which traditional masculine ideologies leads to the endorsement of the specific rape myth of victim precipitation, but possibly not the mechanism by which traditional masculine ideologies leads to the endorsement of the rape myths of victim fabrication or victim masochism. This stands to reason, as the victim precipitation myth involves the idea that one is able to take actions in order to avoid or control a rape situation (e.g., through one's choice of clothing or the neighborhood in which they inhabit). This may be in accordance with an internal locus of control, in which people generally feel as though they and others are in control of their own actions and consequences.

However, it is less likely that locus of control would be a mechanism for the relationship between traditional masculine ideologies and victim fabrication, as this myth refers to the idea that women lie or exaggerate about their rape experience. Locus of control as a mechanism for the relationship between traditional masculine ideologies and victim masochism is also unlikely, as this myth refers to the general idea that the woman enjoyed being raped (Koss et al., 1994). Rather, these myths might be related to negative attitudes toward women because they speak more to a lack of respect for women than to the controllability of negative outcomes.

Research suggests that hostility toward women may partially account for the acceptance of rape myths in general (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). In fact, a study by Lee, Kim, and Lim (2010) found that negative attitudes toward women were a greater predictor of rape myths than was gender or the possession of sexual double standards. Further, research suggests that endorsement of certain aspects of traditional masculine ideologies, such as the "toughness norms," is positively associated with negative attitudes towards women (Gallagher & Parrott, 2011). Thus, this pattern of relationships between rape myths, traditional masculine ideologies,

and negative attitudes toward women is in line with the possibility that negative attitudes towards women mediate the relationship between traditional masculine ideologies and rape myths.

In the current study, we explored the possible mechanisms by which traditional masculine ideologies are associated with rape myth acceptance. We also attempted to determine whether these mechanisms vary as a function of rape myth sub-types. We offered the following hypotheses:

H1: Traditional masculine ideologies would be positively related to the three types of rape myths (victim fabrication, victim masochism, and victim precipitation).

H2: Negative attitudes toward women would mediate the association between traditional masculine ideologies and the three types of rape myths.

H3: Locus of control would mediate the association between traditional masculine ideologies and victim precipitated rape myths.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

A total of 100 male participants were recruited from both Introductory Sociology and Psychology courses at an average-sized university in the Midwest. The majority of participants was Caucasian (84%), followed by African American (6%), Latino American (5%), Asian American (3%), and unspecified (2%). In addition, 53% were freshman, 27% were sophomores, 13% were juniors, 6% were seniors, and 1% were of another educational status. The mean age of the sample was 19-years-old ( $SD = 1.2$ ), with ages ranging from 18 to 25. The majority of the sample lived in a campus dorm at the time of the study (65%), followed by a campus apartment or house (26%), an off-campus apartment or house (6%), and a fraternity house (3%).

### **Measures**

***Rape Myths.*** The Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance scale (IRMA; Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999), is a 45-item scale in which participants rate their agreement to statements on a 1 *do not agree at all* to 7 *very much agree* scale. This measure contains subscales that assess the three types of myths that were of interest in the current study: victim precipitation, victim masochism, and victim fabrication. The IRMA has well-demonstrated reliability (Payne et al., 1999) and validity (Diem, 2000).

***Traditional Masculine Ideology.*** The Male Role Norms scale (MRNS; Thompson & Pleck, 1986) is a 26-item scale that is an abbreviated version of the Brannon Masculinity scale, Short Form (Brannon, 1985). Participants rated their level of agreement on a scale of 1 *strongly disagree* to 7 *strongly agree*. Higher scores reflect more traditional attitudes toward male role norms. This measure has demonstrated good internal consistency (White & Robinson Kurpius, 2002) and convergent validity with measures of attitudes towards women (Thompson, Pleck, & Ferrera, 1992).

***Locus of Control.*** The Rotter Internal-External Locus of Control scale is comprised of 29 question pairs including six filler questions and 23 questions pertaining to locus of control (Rotter, 1966). Internal statements are paired with external statements with a forced choice format. A zero is given for each internal statement that is chosen, and a one is given for each external statement that is chosen. Thus, a high score indicates a high external locus of control (Ramanaiah & Adams, 1981). The construct validity of this measure has been shown to be good, as many studies have found expected relations between characteristics of locus of control using this particular scale (e.g., Hansen, 1984). Researchers have found the internal consistency reliability values for this scale to range from .65 to .79 (e.g., Nassi & Abramowitz, 1980; Phares, 1976).

***Attitudes Toward Women.*** The Attitudes Toward Women scale (AWS, Spence & Helmreich, 1978) is a 15 measure in which participants rate their agreement with statements from 0 *agree strongly* to 3 *disagree strongly*. The items concentrate on vocational, educational, marital, dating, and role behaviors of women. The scale mixes egalitarian and non-egalitarian statements about roles for women and is reverse scored accordingly. This scale is one of the most frequently used measures of attitudes toward women, mainly because research has consistently shown that this scale has good reliability and validity (e.g., Furnham & Karani, 1985).

***Social Desirability.*** The Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR; Paulhus, 1994) is a 40-item instrument used to measure the two components of social desirability: self-deceptive enhancement (SDE; i.e., responding to items with an unconscious positive bias to protect one's self-esteem) and impression management (IM; i.e., consciously adjusting item responses to make a favorable impression on others) (Paulhus, 1994; Stober, Dette, & Musch, 2002). The BIDR has been shown to have acceptable internal consistency and good concurrent validity (Laurenceau, Kleinman, Kaczynski, & Carver, 2010).

## **Procedures**

Participants completed measures of rape myths, traditional masculine ideologies, locus of control, attitudes toward women, and social desirability. Demographic measures always came first in the questionnaire packet. The order of the rest of the questionnaires was counterbalanced using a random starting order with rotation procedure (e.g., CBA, BAC, ACB). Lastly, participants were thanked and debriefed.

## **Results**

### **Preliminary Analyses**

Table 1 summarizes the means, standard deviations, ranges and Cronbach's alphas of the continuous study variables. Preliminary analyses were also conducted to examine the relationships between demographic variables and social desirability and the primary, continuous criterion variables (i.e., victim precipitation, victim fabrication, and victim masochism). The zero-order correlations between the three types of rape myths and either age or social desirability were not significant. One-way ANOVA revealed no significant differences in rape myth endorsement as a function of race or living situation. Thus, these demographic variables and social desirability were not controlled for in the primary analyses.

[[Insert Table 1 here]]

### Primary Hypotheses

***Hypothesis 1: Traditional masculine ideology would be positively related to the three types of rape myths.*** In order to test Hypothesis 1, a correlation matrix was computed that included the predictor (traditional masculine ideology), mediators (locus of control and attitudes toward women), and criterion (victim precipitation, victim masochism, and victim fabrication) variables. The mediators were included in order to get a complete picture of how the primary variables were interrelated (See Table 2). Consistent with Hypothesis 1, the results indicated that traditional masculine ideology was significantly related to victim precipitation ( $r = .29, p < .01$ ), victim fabrication ( $r = .31, p < .01$ ), and victim masochism ( $r = .23, p < .05$ ), such that participants who endorsed traditional masculine ideologies were more likely to also endorse rape myths.

[[Insert Table 2 here]]

In terms of other relevant associations, the results revealed a significant relationship between negative attitudes toward women and traditional masculine ideologies ( $r = -.57, p < .01$ ), but a non-significant relationship between locus of control and traditional masculine ideologies ( $r = .09, p > .05$ ). Further, as a significant relationship between negative attitudes toward women and both victim fabrication ( $r = -.31, p < .01$ ) and victim masochism ( $r = -.36, p < .01$ ) was found. However, no relationship was found between locus of control and victim precipitation ( $r = -.15, p > .05$ ).

***Hypothesis 2: Negative attitudes toward women would mediate the association between traditional masculine ideology and the three types of rape myths.*** Preacher and Hayes's (2008) bootstrapping procedure was used to test Hypotheses 2 and 3, rather than Baron and Kenny's (1986) four step technique, because unlike other mediation analysis methods, bootstrapping is not limited by the assumption of multivariate normality. In support of Hypothesis 2 and 3, the bootstrap confidence intervals (of 95 percent) were expected to exclude values of zero.

To test Hypothesis 2, three analyses were conducted, one for each type of rape myth. The results indicated that negative attitudes towards women mediated the relationship between traditional masculine ideologies and victim precipitation rape myths (95% confidence interval [CI]= .0073 to .1326), victim masochism (95% confidence interval [CI]= .0161 to .0810,  $p < .01$ ), and victim fabrication (95% confidence interval [CI]= .0004 to .0066,  $p < .01$ ).

***Hypothesis 3: Locus of Control would mediate the association between traditional masculine ideology and the three types of rape myths.*** To test Hypothesis 3, three analyses were conducted, one for each type of rape myth. The results of these mediational analyses failed to support the hypothesis that locus of control would mediate the relationship between traditional



masculine ideologies and victim precipitation rape myths (95% confidence interval [CI]= -.0331 to .0017,  $p > .05$ ). Further, the results indicated that locus of control was also not a mediator when victim masochism (95% confidence interval [CI]= -.0157 to .0027,  $p > .05$ ) or victim fabrication (95% confidence interval [CI]= -.0165 to .0048,  $p > .05$ ) were used as the criterion variable.

## **Discussion**

### **Attitudes Toward Women as a Mediator**

The findings of the current study suggest that general negative attitudes toward women are critical in understanding the relationship between traditional masculine ideologies and rape myth acceptance. While research has found positive associations between negative attitudes toward women and both traditional masculine ideologies (Gallagher & Parrott, 2011) and rape myths (Lee, Kim, & Lim, 2010), this is the first study, to our knowledge, that has found evidence that negative attitudes toward women serves as a mediator. Further, as stated previously, unlike other conceptualizations of traditional masculine ideologies and related constructs, Pleck's model and associated measure doesn't directly embody negative attitudes toward women (Pleck et al., 1993; Thompson, Pleck, & Ferrera, 1992). Rather, this measure assesses the degree to which a man believes that men should be powerful, non-feminine, and tough/independent.

These results are intriguing in that they suggest that these specific prescriptions of what men should be like are not innocuous, but rather may predispose men who endorse these attitudes to also endorse attitudes that women should possess less power and freedom than men. Moreover, it is these anti-woman attitudes, not other factors associated with the endorsement of traditional masculine ideologies, that predict higher levels of rape myth endorsement. These findings are in line with theories of victimization against women that emphasize the importance

of sustaining men's power over women (Sheffield, 1995). Empirical research, such a cross-cultural study by Archer (2006), has verified this positive association between sexist attitudes toward women and sexual victimization.

Traditional masculine ideologies may also create tensions or conflicts in some men stemming from pressures associated with this role. Such tensions may manifest in a disdain toward anything feminine or "soft" and a denigration of women (Gallagher & Parrott, 2011). This disdain toward women, in turn, may lead to rationalizing of acts of aggression against women. It is notable that, contrary to our initial hypotheses, negative attitudes toward women served as a mediator for all three types of rape myths. While mediation was not predicted for victim precipitated rape myths, the fact that mediation was found for all three types of rape myths speaks to the broad-based overlap between the constructs of anti-woman attitudes and rape myths.

Our findings suggest a possible focus for university programs that aim at preventing violence against women. Such programs could benefit from focusing on changing negative beliefs about women, specifically inaccurate or dysfunctional views of power dynamics between men and women. Although some prevention programs incorporate a focus on gender role socialization, as well as power inequities between men and women, many prevention programs continue to focus almost exclusively on providing factual information about rape and rape victims (Rozee, 2011). Given our findings pointing to the key roles of traditional masculine ideologies and negative attitudes toward women in shaping rape myths, a focus on these variables in prevention programs would be a useful supplement to information-based programs.

### **Locus of Control as a Mediator**

Since locus of control was hypothesized to be the mediator between traditional masculine ideology and victim precipitation, it was predicted that there would be a significant relationship between traditional masculine ideology and locus of control. Although previous research has found a significant relationship between internal locus of control and traditional attitudes of gender roles (Furnham & Karani, 1985), the results of this study did not indicate such a relationship. Locus of control also was not found to be significantly related to victim precipitation rape myths. However, as with traditional masculine ideology, previous studies have indicated a significant relationship between locus of control and rape myth acceptance (Thornton, Robbins, & Johnson, 1981).

One possible explanation as to why these findings are inconsistent with previous research may be the low reliability value of the scale that was used (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .66$ ). Since the Rotter's questionnaire was developed in 1966, many researchers have critiqued and refined the measurement tool (Marsh & Richards, 1987). Although Rotter's original instrument is still widely used, people are increasingly turning to more specific measures of locus of control with better reliability values. In addition, some scholars believe that this measure is too unidimensional, thus, leading researchers to use other measures when looking at both internality and externality (Ang & Chang, 1999). An example of a more multidimensional tool is Levenson's Internality, Powerful Others, Chance Scale (IPC) which assesses different dimensions of locus of control, such as beliefs that events in one's life are self-determined, are organized by powerful others, and are due to chance. In the next section, we will outline limitations of the current study in greater detail.

### **Limitations**

One limitation that could be addressed in future research involves the population surveyed. A majority of the participants were Caucasian (84%), and over half of the participants were in their first year of college. Moreover, the data was collected during the fall semester of the academic year, thereby making the sample even more limited in terms of factors such as level of maturity, sexual experience, and development of own's personal attitudes. In addition, all participants were from a private, Catholic university. Thus, because of their religious background they may have less negative attitudes toward women, or be more reluctant to voice these attitudes, than the general population. It is also possible that a study including a wider range of participants standing on certain demographic variables, such as age or race, could yield different results. For example, a study conducted by Hinck and Thomas (1999) indicated that African-American students and Hispanic students were more accepting of rape myths than Caucasian students. However, it should be noted that there is very little research pointing to a consistent relationship between racial and ethnic identity and the acceptance of rape myths (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

A second limitation is that no measure was included in the study to determine a history of perpetrating sexual violence. This may be a predictor of whether a man chooses to engage in sexually violent behaviors himself in the future. For example, Manning, Longmore, and Giordano (2005) found that prior sexual activity strongly influences the relationship context of later sex in teenagers. Further, in general, research suggests that measures of past behavior are reliable predictors of future behavior, more so than attitudes and intentions (Ouellette & Wood, 1998). Thus, focusing solely on attitudes in the current study was limiting because it remains unclear whether a history of perpetration accounts for the findings observed in the current study.

Another potential measurement limitation of the current study pertains to the use of the Attitudes Towards Women (ATW) scale. Some research suggests that scores on this measure have decreased among both men and women since the development of the scale in the 1970's (Twenge, 1997). Moreover, while research suggests that this measure is moderately to highly positively correlated with more recent measures of sexist attitudes, such as the Modern Sexism scale, there is some evidence that the ATW assesses more blatant forms of sexism than other measures (Hayes & Swim, 2013). Thus, future research in this area should explore whether the same processes operate in men who endorse more subtle sexist attitudes.

A final limitation of the current study is that the variables included were not experimentally manipulated, thereby precluding causal claims. Since the study measured individual's possibly deeply rooted beliefs, such as traditional masculine ideologies, attitudes toward women, and rape myth acceptance, experimentally manipulating these variables may prove challenging. Further, because these variables have been found to predict sexual assault perpetration, such experimental manipulation would pose ethical concerns as well. In view of the infeasibility of experimental methods, the use of cross-lagged longitudinal designs is an important next step in this research area. While such a design would not definitively demonstrate causal order of the variables of interest in the current study, we would be one step closer in determining the etiological development of rape myths.

### **Directions for Future Research**

There are several factors not examined within the current study that could be useful to explore in the future. As stated previously, it may be helpful to examine the association between the respondent's history of perpetration of sexual abuse and the variables examined in the current study. In addition, future research may benefit from using a more reliable and multidimensional

measure of locus of control. It also would be important to explore whether these findings can be extended to types of violence against women, such as intimate partner violence more broadly defined.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, future research needs to focus on how to reduce rape myth acceptance. The current study suggests that interventions aimed at changing traditional masculine ideologies and negative attitudes toward women may reduce rape myth acceptance. For example, there needs to be a societal push for teachers, parents, and other adult role models to refrain from encouraging the social construction of male gender roles as being akin to callousness, lack of empathy, and suppression of any feelings or sentiments that could be considered “weak” or “feminine.” There also needs to be education in the classroom, rape prevention programs, and home regarding gender equality, separating myth from fact in regards to rape and other violent behaviors against women (Rozee, 2011). In addition, it would be advantageous to change the way that media portray relationships, which overall depicts men as domineering and sexually aggressive toward women. There is some evidence that such depictions in the media may perpetuate stereotypes of traditional gender roles and, thus, maintain men’s negative views of women (Kahlor & Eastin, 2011). With additional research, it may be possible to develop a targeted treatment that would work to lessen the acceptance of rape myths on our college campuses and within our society in general.

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Table 1

*Means, Standard Deviations, Ranges, and Cronbach Alphas for the Continuous, Study variable*

Measure	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min-Max	Cronbach $\alpha$
ATW	28.67	5.5	13-40	.66
LOC	11.14	2.15	3-17	.66
TMI	105.80	20.9	37-174	.88
VMasc	10.82	4.6	5-23	.76
VFab	18.10	5.4	5-32	.81
VPrecip	23.95	8.7	8-42	.83
Impression Management	3.91	2.8	0-13	.64
Self-Decept. Enhancement	5.52	3.2	0-14	.69

Note. ATW=Attitudes Toward Women. LOC=Locus of Control. TMI=Traditional Masculine Ideologies. VMasc=Victim Masochism. VFab=Victim Fabrication. VPrecip=Victim Precipitation. Self-Decept. Enhancement=Self-Deception Enhancement.

Table 2

*Zero-Order Correlations Between Rape Myths, Locus of Control, Negative Attitudes Toward Women, and Traditional Masculine Ideologies*

Variable	VPrecip	VFab	VMasc	LOC	ATW	TMI
VPrecip	---	.64**	.60**	-.15	-.36**	.29**
VFab		---	.53**	-.03	-.31**	.31**
VMasc			---	-.12	-.36**	.23*
LOC				---	-.01	.09
ATW					---	-.57**
TMI						---

Note. VPrecip=Victim Precipitation. VFab=Victim Fabrication. VMasc=Victim Masochism. LOC=Locus of Control. ATW=Attitudes Toward Women. TMI=Traditional Masculine Ideology.

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01