2023

Rape Myth Acceptance and Attitudes Toward Bystander Intervention Among Division III College Student Athletes and Nonathletes

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
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MSC, University of Phoenix, 2009

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Health Psychology

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September 2023

Abstract

Sexual assault on college campuses is a significant concern and deemed a public health problem. Research suggested that certain groups, such as male college student athletes, may be the main offenders and contributors to the problem. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between acceptance of specific rape myths and attitudes toward bystander intervention in specific situations among Division III athletes and nonathletes on a college campus. The theory of planned behavior and feminist theory served as the foundation for this quantitative study. An archival dataset was analyzed that included undergraduate students ($N = 313$) from a Division III institution. Results from hierarchical multiple regression analyses showed that rape myth acceptance and athlete status significantly predicted attitudes toward bystander intervention. Higher endorsement of rape myths predicted more negative attitude toward bystander intervention and athletes had more negative attitudes toward bystander intervention than nonathletes. The findings from this study may lead to positive social change by providing college/university administrators and educators insight into the factors that can influence a college student's decision to intervene as a bystander and in turn help enhance sexual violence education and prevention programs.

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Dedication

This is dedicated to all the health educators and health promotion and prevention advocates (regardless of title at the various institutions) who do this work. Your efforts do not go unnoticed and I appreciate your dedication to cultural change. Preventing sexual violence is vital to the overall wellbeing of a campus. I hope that everyone strives to have healthier and safer campuses.

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Perry and Dr. Dexter for their time, dedication, and support during this process. Dr. Perry – Words cannot truly express my appreciation for your understanding of life circumstances that created obstacles in the process, and for your supportive yet firm direction to help me regain motivation to accomplish this goal. Dr. Dexter – I still hold your words of wisdom and affirmations. They helped motivate me during the times I felt the light at the end of the tunnel was out of reach.

I would also like to thank my mother, who gave me time to focus on this work without guilt. The sacrifice of her own time and energy was vital to my successful completion of this process. And lastly, but certainly not least, I want to thank my children. My oldest son, Keaton, and youngest son, Kylan. Both who have given me Mother's Day cards from early grade school years that said my job was "dissertation" or "computer." They sacrificed plenty of beautiful days that could have been spent engaging in outdoor adventures and much quality mom/son time. I hope that the sacrifices we all made during this period lead us to a core belief that we can do hard things and accomplish goals, even if they appear to be insurmountable at the time.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Sexual assault is recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) as a public health problem, and research indicates that incidence of sexual assaults on colleges campuses is prevalent. Other research has demonstrated a correlation between rape myth acceptance and attitudes toward sexual violence (Hayes et al., 2016; McMahon, 2010; McMahon et al., 2014; Zapp, 2015). These studies indicated that male college students with higher levels of rape myth acceptance were more likely to report being perpetrators of sexually violent behaviors against women. Rape myths are commonly and persistently held to justify, minimize, or deny sexually violent behavior (Lonsway & Fitzgerald,1994). Certain populations, such as male social fraternities and athletes, pose a higher risk for sexual violence due to greater acceptance of rape myths (Humphrey & Kahn, 2000; Sønderlund et al., 2013; Young et al., 2016).

Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and Policy (2018) suggested that a public health approach should be taken to reduce sexual violence on college campuses, which should include further research on campus culture (i.e., the presence of Greek organizations or whether it is a dry campus) and effective bystander intervention programs. There also needs to be a more comprehensive examination of bystander intervention programs and efforts to reduce rape myth acceptance across all types of institutions and subgroups (McMahon et al., 2014). Previous research has not specifically examined Division III college student athletes and attitudes toward bystander intervention as it relates to sexual assault (i.e., post-assault support for victims, post-assault reporting of perpetrators, and proactive opportunities). Therefore, the current study addressed the

gap in literature by examining the extent to which the specific types of rape myth acceptance, student status (athlete, nonathlete), and gender are related to the attitudes toward bystander intervention in specific situations. The results from this study promote positive social change by assisting institutions of higher education in their programming efforts related to sexual assault prevention.

This chapter will provide a background of the literature, identifying the gap in the research that justifies the need for the study. The problem statement, purpose, research questions and hypotheses, operational definitions for the variables, and nature of the study will also be presented. Lastly, the theoretical framework, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study will be discussed.

Background

Introduced by feminist theorists in the 1970s, rape myths describe distorted cultural beliefs that were thought to be at the foundation of sexual aggressions perpetrated by males against females (Edwards et al., 2011). Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) conceptualized rape myths and argued that these common and persistent beliefs justify, minimize, and deny sexually violent behavior. Some examples of rape myths include “if a girl doesn’t say ‘no,’ she can’t claim rape,” “when girls go to parties wearing slutty clothes, they are asking for trouble,” “she asked for it,” “he didn’t mean to,” “it wasn’t really rape,” and “she lied” (McMahon, 2010, McMahon et al., 2014). Research has indicated that when an individual or a group endorses or accepts rape myths, they foster a tolerance of sexual assault (Abbey et al., 2001; Canan et al., 2016; Humphrey & Kahn, 2000).

Previous research efforts to reduce rape myth acceptance by creating positive campaigns for bystander intervention has provided mixed results (Holtz et al., 2018; McMahon, et al., 2014; McMahon et al., 2014). That is, campus campaigns challenge typical rape myths and encourage prosocial bystander intervention but do not always result in lower rape myth acceptance within some groups (i.e., male athletes). Research has identified key constructs, such as rape myth acceptance, to examine attitudes and beliefs common to rape culture and perpetrators of sexual violence. These studies suggested that the approach to reducing rape myth acceptance and increasing bystander intervention on campus must be treated in a more comprehensive manner by examining those issues within the context of rape culture across all types of institutions and subgroups. Acceptance of rape myths leads to the objectification of women and encourages the stereotypical role of male dominance (Ryan, 2011), and men are more likely than women to accept rape myths due to society's normalization of sexual violence and patriarchal-constructed gender norms (Hayes et al., 2013). Rape myths influence sexual attitudes and behavior. Therefore, in a culture where there is high acceptance of rape myths, there is a likelihood of also tolerating sexual violence against women.

Despite research that shows some positive impact of prevention programs , sexual assaults on college campuses remain an epidemic (Zapp, 2015). Young et al. (2016) completed a study at a Division I institution comparing recreational athletes, intercollegiate athletes, and nonathletes to examine attitudes towards women, rape myth acceptance, and prevalence of sexual coercion. They found that athletes reported more traditional male gender role attitudes (e.g., an emphasis on masculine dominance and

feminine passivity) and higher rape myth acceptance than nonathletes. Similarly, Navarro and Tewksbury (2017) completed a national comparison of rape myth acceptance between nonathletes and athletes from twenty-one (21) Division I institutions in the United States and found that athletes (male and female) had a greater acceptance of rape myths than nonathletes. Earlier research conducted by McMahon (2010) found similar results; however, the author also examined outcomes related to prevention education and found that college student athletes with previous education related to rape endorsed fewer rape myths and more positive bystander attitudes.

Some studies have examined bystander intervention attitudes and beliefs related to sexual assault and violence on college campuses, suggesting that gender norms (e.g., masculinity) create barriers to intervention and that there is a need to reduce rape myth acceptance for bystander intervention effectiveness (Holtz et al., 2018; Hoxmeier et al., 2017; Katz & Moore, 2013; McMahon, 2010). Males hold higher levels of rape myth acceptance and less positive attitudes toward bystander intervention compared to females, suggesting that masculinity may influence not only rape myth acceptance but also sexual violent behavior toward women. That is, men who endorse traditional gender norms are at increased risk for sexual aggression toward women (Hayes et al., 2013; Vass & Gold, 1995).

Other research has examined rape myth acceptance and bystander attitudes among college students and determined male college student athletes to be among the “at-risk” group for sexual violence perpetration (Moynihan & Banyard, 2008; Zapp, 2015). Athletes have reported more traditional male gender role attitudes (e.g., an emphasis on

masculine dominance and feminine passivity) and higher rape myth acceptance than nonathletes (Young et al., 2016). Similarly, a national comparison of rape myth acceptance between nonathletes and athletes from 21 Division I institutions in the United States indicated that athletes (male and female) had a greater acceptance of rape myths than nonathletes (Navarro & Tewksbury, 2017). Earlier research found similar results; however, college student athletes with previous education related to rape endorsed fewer rape myths and more positive bystander attitudes (McMahon, 2010). This is consistent with the literature on masculinity and sport, in which male athletes are encouraged to be aggressive; they are also viewed as privileged and socially dominant (Steinfeldt et al., 2016). Thus, the research suggests that gender roles, and specifically masculinity, are factors in rape myth acceptance and attitudes toward bystander intervention.

One approach to examining rape myth acceptance and sexual violence is to consider attitudes toward bystander intervention as it relates to specific situations (McMahon et al., 2014). Bystander intervention is viewed on a continuum, allowing for intervention before, during, or after a sexual assault occurs. The opportunities for intervention involving a sexual assault situation are vast and involve distinct types of situations. These range from a high-risk situation (e.g., an intoxicated woman being led away from a party by a male she just met) to situations that pose no immediate harm but support rape culture (e.g., comments or jokes that are sexist or promote violence against women; McMahon & Banyard, 2012; McMahon et al., 2014). In addition, bystanders can seek to be proactive by engaging in training or becoming peer educators, as well as

provide support to survivors after an incident (Lemon & Wawrzynski, 2020; McMahon & Banyard, 2012; Moynihan et al., 2015).

The current study was conducted to examine the relationship between rape myth acceptance and attitudes toward bystander intervention as it relates to specific situations (i.e., high-risk situations, post-assault support for victims, post-assault reporting of perpetrators, and proactive opportunities) among Division III athletes and nonathletes on a college campus. Not only is there no known research that analyzes the relationship between rape myth acceptance and attitudes towards bystander intervention related to specific situations, but the study also fills a gap in research pertaining to an identified subgroup (Division III student athletes). The study was needed to address the limits in the current research related to college student athletes and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the problem, given collegiate athletics is not monolithic.

Problem Statement

Previous research indicates that male student athletes have been overrepresented as perpetrators of sexual violence (Crosset et al., 1996; Fritner & Rubinson, 1993; Koss & Gaines, 1993; McCray, 2015; Melnick, 1992), whereas other research has indicated that some student athletes believe they have been unfairly targeted for sexual assault incidents (Sawyer et al., 2002). More recent research has examined rape culture within the college setting and the differences between college student athletes and non-athletes. These studies have shown that male college student athletes had greater acceptance of rape myths and were at higher risk for committing acts of sexual violence (Humphrey & Kahn, 2000; Sønderlund et al., 2013; Young et al., 2016). However, others have found

that there were similarities among athletes and nonathletes in predictors of rape myth acceptance (e.g., social characteristics, such as knowing a victim of sexual assault, was important in the reduction of rape myth acceptance in both athletes and nonathletes; Navarro & Tewksbury, 2017).

Previous research indicates that efforts to reduce rape myth acceptance and create positive campaigns for bystander intervention must be treated in a more comprehensive manner by examining those issues across all types of institutions and subgroups (Holtz et al., 2018; McMahon, et al., 2014; McMahon et al., 2014). More specifically, the association between gender norms, rape myth acceptance, and attitudes toward bystander intervention should be examined given that males are less likely to intervene. In addition, previous research has not specifically examined the different types of rape myth acceptance (i.e., she asked for it, he didn't mean to, it wasn't really rape, and she lied) or the specific situations in which bystander intervention can occur (i.e., high-risk situations, post-assault support for victims, post-assault reporting of perpetrators, and proactive opportunities). Therefore, there is a gap in research in which neither the subgroup (Division III college student athletes) nor the relationship between rape myth acceptance and attitudes toward bystander intervention has been adequately researched.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this quantitative, cross-sectional survey study was to investigate the relationship between acceptance of specific rape myths and attitudes toward bystander intervention in specific situations among Division III athletes and nonathletes on a college campus. Specifically, this study addresses the gap through an examination of

the extent to which acceptance of specific rape myths, athlete status, and gender predict attitudes toward bystander intervention in four specific situations (i.e., high-risk situations, post-assault support for victims, post-assault reporting of perpetrators, and proactive opportunities). This study included archival data from a student survey on health and wellness to gain insight into factors related to attitudes toward bystander intervention (Honeycutt & Khodorkovskaya, 2018). The results from this study promote positive social change by assisting institutions of higher education in their programming efforts related to sexual assault prevention.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ 1: To what extent does rape myth acceptance (total score), as measured by the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale-Short Form (IRMA-SF), relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the Bystander Attitude Scale-Revised (BAS-R), among Division III students?

$H_0$1: The rape myth acceptance (total score) is not a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

H_a1: The rape myth acceptance (total score) is a significant predicator of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

RQ 2: To what extent does rape myth subscale of "she asked for it," as measured by IRMA-SF, relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

$H_0$2: The rape myth subscale of "she asked for it" is not a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

H_a2: The rape myth subscale of "she asked for it" is a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

RQ 3: To what extent does rape myth subscale of "he didn't mean to," as measured by IRMA-SF, relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

$H_0 3$: The rape myth subscale of "he didn't mean to" is not a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

$H_a 3$: The rape myth subscale of "he didn't mean to" is a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

RQ 4: To what extent does rape myth subscale of "it wasn't really rape," as measured by IRMA-SF, relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

$H_0 4$: The rape myth subscale of "it wasn't really rape" is not a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

$H_a 4$: The rape myth subscale of "it wasn't really rape" is a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

RQ 5: To what extent does rape myth subscale of "she lied," as measured by IRMA-SF, relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

$H_0 5$: The rape myth subscale of "she lied" is not a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

H_a5: The rape myth subscale of "she lied" is a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

RQ 6: To what extent does rape myth subscale of "she wanted it," as measured by IRMA-SF, relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

H_06: The rape myth subscale of "she wanted it" is not a predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

H_a6: The rape myth subscale of "she wanted it" is a predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

RQ 7: To what extent does rape myth subscale of "rape is a trivial event," as measured by IRMA-SF, relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

H_07: The rape myth subscale of "rape is a trivial event" is not a predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

H_a7: The rape myth subscale of "rape is a trivial event" is a predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

RQ 8: To what extent does rape myth subscale of "rape is a deviant event," as measured by IRMA-SF, relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

H_08: The rape myth subscale of "rape is a deviant event" is not a predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

H_a8: The rape myth subscale of "rape is a deviant event" is a predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

RQ 9: To what extent does Division III student status (athlete, nonathlete) relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measure by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

H_09: Division III student athlete status is not a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

H_a9: Division III student athlete status is a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

RQ 10: To what extent does gender relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measure by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

H_010: Gender is not a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

H_a10: Gender is a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

Theoretical Foundation

The study was informed by the theory of planned behavior, which asserts that an individual's behavior can be best predicted by their attitude and beliefs about the behavior as well as their perception of social norms related to the behavior (Ajzen, 1985; Montano & Kasprzyk, 2008). An individual's attitude about a behavior is one of three factors that needs to be considered when understanding an individual's intention to engage in a behavior, such as bystander intervention. Additionally, attitudes are linked with normative beliefs and confidence (McMahon et al., 2014). An individual's

subjective norm is established by their perception of normative beliefs (i.e., whether their peers will approve or disapprove of the behavior coupled with the individual's motivation to comply or meet expectations; Montaño & Kasprzyk, 2008). Therefore, to understand how to encourage individuals to actively engage in bystander intervention, one must understand the attitudes involved in bystander intervention related to the prevention of sexual violence (McMahon et al., 2014). The theory of planned behavior was applied to understand attitudes towards bystander intervention in the social context of normative beliefs (i.e., rape myths) about sexual violence against women (Chapleau & Oswald, 2013; Hayes et al., 2016; McMahon et al., 2014).

Additionally, the concept of sexual assault was developed from research attempting to understand the psychopathology of rapists in the 1950s (MacKinnon, 1989; McDermott et al., 2015). The feminist perspective approaches sexual assault as a systemic problem due to men's socialization, rather than a problem attributed to individual psychopathology (McDermott et al., 2015). Therefore, the feminist perspective approaches sexual assault as a systemic problem due to men's socialization and helps to define key constructs (e.g., rape culture, rape myths, and rape myth acceptance) relevant to the study. Feminist theorists assert that the "root" cause of women's second-class status is misogyny, which underpins socially constructed power relations that entitle males access, on-demand, to female bodies. According to feminist theorists, this entitlement makes it difficult to claim sexual aggression is not just sex and that if sex took place, then female consent must have been granted (MacKinnon, 1987). If males are entitled to sexual access, then rape does not exist, and females who claim to have been

raped must have asked for it, deserved it, or lied about it. This is the belief system that informs rape mythology; those who endorse rape myths would not likely intervene should they witness a sexual assault.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a nonexperimental quantitative design using survey methodology, which is appropriate for examining relationships and patterns among several variables (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). The study followed a cross-sectional design, which provides a "snapshot" view of results within a specific period and focuses on drawing inferences from existing differences between people, subjects, or phenomena (Alexander et al., 2015). Surveys generate date from a sample of the targeted population (Groves et al., 2009). In this study, the targeted population was student athletes and nonathletes within a Division III institution to examine rape myth acceptance and attitudes toward bystander intervention. Four hierarchical multiple regressions were used to evaluate the relative strength of student rape myth acceptance (total score and subscales: she asked for it, he didn't mean to, it wasn't really rape, and she lied), athlete status, and gender in predicting attitudes toward bystander intervention in four specific situations (i.e., high-risk situations, post-assault support for victims, post-assault reporting of perpetrators, and proactive opportunities).

Definitions

Bystander intervention: When a third-party observes a situation or event, perceives it to be a problem and chooses to respond in a way that could positively influence the outcome (Darley & Latané, 1968).

Hegemonic masculinity: A cultural ideal attained only by men whose dominant behavior perpetuates and protects the gender hierarchy (Reddy et al., 2019).

Hypermasculinity: Traits, such as overt aggressive behaviors, and beliefs, attitudes and values that hold women as sexual objects, violence as manly, and a male heterosexual identity at the top of the social hierarchy, devaluing emotions or other qualities deemed to be feminine (Corprew et al., 2014; Vass & Gold, 1995).

NCAA Division I: The highest level of competition for college student athletes, in which athletes are given a full athletic scholarship to play the sport and attend the college (NCAA, 2021).

NCAA Division III: The focus is on the college student athletes' academics (i.e., a student first mentality), with integration of the sport for a "well-rounded" college experience. Athletic scholarships are not permitted (NCAA, 2021).

Rape myths: A set of beliefs and values that justify or minimize the incident, occurrence or impact of rape (Thomae & Viki, 2013).

Rape culture: A violent landscape in which men display power and control (i.e., male dominance and aggression), use intimidation to control a woman's behavior, undermine her confidence, and restrict independence, as well as create fear of sexual assault towards women (Brownmiller, 1975; Buchwald et al., 1993; Burt, 1980).

Sexual assault: Any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient. This includes when the victim lacks capacity to consent (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017).

Assumptions

In the study, it was assumed that all student athlete respondents participated in Division III sports. It was also assumed that the participants understood the survey questions and responded to them honestly. However, due the nature of some of the survey items regarding rape myths and intervening in specific situations, some participants may have been reluctant or uncomfortable responding truthfully. Participants were reminded that the data were collected anonymously which should increase the likelihood of honest responses. Additionally, it was assumed that participants' attitudes and behavioral responses to the bystander situations were reflective of how they would respond in real-world social situations.

Scope and Delimitations

The study was designed to examine factors that predict attitudes toward bystander intervention in relation to sexual assault within the Division III college student athlete population. Recent literature claims sexual assault is prevalent on college campuses, rising to the level of a public health problem (Johns Hopkins, 2018; World Health Organization, 2021). Thus, campaigns and programs to reduce sexual assault on college campuses have been established, with a target audience for such programs being those identified as student leaders, including the athletes (Holtz, et al., 2018; McMahon, et al., 2014; University of Arizona, n.d.; White House, 2014).

The target population for this study was undergraduate students who attend a traditional, campus-based university with a NCAA Division III athletics designation. The sample was limited to Division III student athletes with consideration that they are a

subgroup, existing with cultural differences that influence attitudes and beliefs, among the college student athlete population (McMahon, 2010; McMahon et al., 2014). Examining the cultural difference within the NCAA divisions (e.g., Division I, II, and III) is beyond the scope of the study. Since this sample is limited to Division III student athletes, results cannot be generalized to all college student athletes.

Additionally, the results may not be generalizable beyond the specific population from which the sample was drawn due to the use of a web-based survey. The bias response rate is higher for Caucasians, females, and disproportionately low for African Americans in surveys (Sax et al., 2003). Furthermore, a web-based survey may lead to reporting more extreme views and behaviors when compared to an in-class survey (Wells et al., 2011). However, it is not expected that using a web-based survey posed any major limitations to generalizing findings to the specific college student population.

The theory of planned behavior was chosen for this study because it provides a theoretical rationale for an individual's decision to act (i.e., decision to intervene as a bystander), which can best be predicted by their attitude and beliefs related to the behavior, as well as their perception of social norms related to the behavior (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2008). Given rape myth acceptance is an attitude or set of beliefs, I examined the extent to which rape myth acceptance influences college students' decision to engage in bystander intervention, particularly within the social norms of the Division III college student population (McMahon et al., 2014).

Limitations

One limitation of the study is that participants who identified as an athlete may exhibit social desirability bias by rejecting rape myths due to the national campaigns and educational programs that target student athletes. Although the survey was anonymous, there may still be pressure to respond in a way that increases social desirability. A second limitation is that I used a measure of bystander attitudes and did not examine actual bystander intervention behavior. A third limitation is that the participants were self-selected; therefore, the sample was not random. This may limit both the representativeness of the sample and the generalizability of the results. Lastly, although the sample is sufficient, it is representative of only one campus in the Northeastern United States.

There is no researcher bias related to this study. However, I acknowledge that as part of my duties as director of a campus wellness center, I was responsible for engaging with students, student athletes, and athletics department, including dealing with issues related to sexual violence. That said, I had no interaction with participants during data collection and they answered the survey anonymously. Certainly, there are other variables that have the potential to influence beliefs and attitudes related to bystander intervention (i.e., personality, self-efficacy, and interpersonal relationships). However, they are beyond the scope of this study.

Significance

The research can support professional practice by examining the subscales of rape mythology and attitudes toward bystander intervention related to four specific situations

(i.e., high-risk situations, post-assault support for victims, post-assault reporting of perpetrators, and proactive opportunities) among college student athletes and nonathletes at a Division III institution. It is important to examine differences among all institutions to obtain a more comprehensive view of the sexual assault problem prevalent on college campuses (Holtz et al., 2018; McMahon et al., 2014; McMahon et al., 2014). In addition, previous research has not specifically examined the different types of rape myth acceptance (i.e., she asked for it, he didn't mean to, it wasn't really rape, and she lied) and the specific situations in which bystander intervention can occur (i.e., high-risk situations, post-assault support for victims, post-assault reporting of perpetrators, and proactive opportunities).

The results from the study may be used to assist educational institutions in the development and implementation of sexual assault prevention programs on college campuses, specifically targeting the student athlete population. Furthermore, the study enhances the existing body of literature specific to examining the extent to which rape myth acceptance relates to attitudes towards bystander intervention among student athletes and nonathletes. The information gleaned from the study contributes to a better understanding of how to tailor prevention programs on college campuses with a Division III student athlete population to encourage future positive outcomes (i.e., reduction of sexual assaults on college campuses), and ultimately contribute to positive social change.

Summary

Sexual assault is a public health problem, and research indicates that sexual assault is prevalent on college campus. Previous research indicates that efforts to reduce

rape myth acceptance, along with educational programs to encourage bystander intervention, have had some success; however, there needs to be a more comprehensive examination of those issues across all types of institutions and subgroups. In the study, I examined the relationship between rape myth acceptance and attitudes toward bystander intervention as it relates to specific situations (i.e., high-risk situations, post-assault support for victims, post-assault reporting of perpetrators, and proactive opportunities) among Division III athletes and nonathletes on a college campus. The study was informed by the theory of planned behavior, asserting that an individual's behavior (i.e., intervening in a potential sexual assault situation as a bystander) can be best predicted by their attitude and beliefs related to rape myth acceptance, as well as their perception of social norms related to bystander intervention. The nature of this study was quantitative with a cross-sectional design, an archival data set, and a web-survey that was disseminated to generate a sample of the targeted population.

In Chapter 2, I will describe the literature search strategy and discuss in more detail the theoretical framework used for this study. I will also share and synthesize the literature that discusses rape culture, rape myths, and rape myth acceptance, as well as delve into the literature related to perceived college social norms, such as hookup culture, and intercollegiate athletics culture. Lastly, I will discuss the development of sexual assault education and prevention on college campuses, with an emphasis on bystander intervention.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this quantitative, cross-sectional survey study was to investigate the relationship between acceptance of specific rape myths and attitudes toward bystander intervention in specific situations among Division III athletes and nonathletes on a college campus. Specifically, I aimed to determine if acceptance of specific rape myths, athlete status, and gender predict attitudes toward bystander intervention in four specific situations related to sexual assault (i.e., post-assault support for victims, post-assault reporting of perpetrators, and proactive opportunities. This study gathered insight on attitudes toward bystander intervention as it relates to sexual assault (i.e., post-assault support for victims, post-assault reporting of perpetrators, and proactive opportunities). Furthermore, the study addresses the gap in literature by examining the extent to which the specific types of rape myth acceptance, student status (athlete, nonathlete) and gender are related to the attitudes toward bystander intervention in specific situations. The results from this study promote positive social change by assisting institutions of higher education in their programming efforts related to sexual assault prevention.

Previous research indicates that student athletes have been overrepresented as perpetrators of sexual violence (Crosset et al., 1996; Fronter & Rubinson, 1993; Koss & Gaines, 1993; Melnick, 1992), and other research has indicated that some student athletes believe they have been unfairly targeted for sexual assault incidents (Sawyer et al., 2002). More recent research has examined rape culture within the college setting and the differences between college student athletes and non-athletes. These studies have shown that college student athletes had greater acceptance of rape myths and were at higher risk

for committing acts of sexual violence (Humphrey & Kahn, 2000; Sønderlund et al., 2013; Young et al., 2016). However, some have found similarities among athletes and nonathletes in predictors of rape myth acceptance (e.g., knowing a sexual assault victim reduced rape myth acceptance among both athletes and nonathletes; Navarro &Tewksbury, 2017).

Additionally, some studies have examined bystander intervention attitudes and beliefs related to sexual assault and violence on college campuses, suggesting that gender norms (e.g., masculinity) create barriers to intervention, increasing the need to reduce rape myth acceptance for bystander intervention effectiveness (Holtz et al., 2018; Hofmeyr et al., 2017; Katz & Moore, 2013; McMahon, 2010). Other research has examined rape myth acceptance and bystander attitudes among college students and determined college student athletes to be among the "at-risk" group for sexual violence perpetration (Moynihan & Banyard, 2008; Zapp, 2015). Efforts to reduce rape myth acceptance and create positive campaigns for bystander intervention must be treated more comprehensively by examining those issues across all types of institutions and subgroups (Holtz et al., 2018; McMahon et al., 2014; McMahon et al., 2014). In addition, previous research has not specifically examined the different types of rape myth acceptance (i.e., she asked for it, he didn't mean to, it wasn't really rape, and she lied) or the specific situations in which bystander intervention can occur (i.e., high-risk situations, post-assault support for victims, post-assault reporting of perpetrators, and proactive opportunities).

In this chapter, I will describe the literature search strategy and address the theoretical framework used for this study. The theoretical framework will include theory of planned behavior to conceptualize an individual's behavior, how it can be predicted by their attitude and beliefs about the behavior, and their perception of social norms related to the behavior. Additionally, I will discuss the historical overview of feminism, which helps to conceptualize rape culture and rape myth acceptance. Finally, this chapter will synthesize literature that discusses the origin of rape culture and rape myth acceptance, as well as the history and development of sexual assault education and prevention on college campuses, with an emphasis on bystander intervention.

Literature Search Strategy

A research strategy was implemented using various University libraries and multiple databases, as well as Google Scholar, Research Gate, and the World Wide Web. Research was gathered from multiple resources, which included textbooks, scholarly journals, peer-reviewed articles, and online databases, such as Educational Resources Information (ERIC), ProQuest, PsycArticles, PsycInfo, and EBSCO Host. The Internet was used to search and retrieve related information from several websites, such as the National College Athletic Association (NCAA) and the Office of Civil Rights (OCR). A Boolean system was used during the searches, to include combining keywords with the connectors "and" or "or." The following search terms were applied*: college, college students, student athletes, college athletes, rape culture, rape myths, rape myth acceptance, sexual assault, gender norms, masculinity, hookup culture, binge drinking, bystander intervention,* and *bystander attitudes*. The initial search was narrowed to the

last 10 years; however, in effort to gain an understanding related to the evolution of the relevant research, the search was expanded to include the last 30 years.

Theoretical Foundation

Theory of Planned Behavior

The study was informed by the theory of planned behavior (TPB), which asserts that an individual's behavior can be predicted best by their attitude and beliefs about the behavior as well as their perception of social norms related to the behavior (Ajzen, 1985, Champion & Skinner, 2008; Montano & Kasprzyk, 2008). TPB was developed by Ajzen (1985), who asserted that the theory of reasoned action was missing a variable and added perceived behavioral control (Armitage & Connor, 2001; Champion & Skinner, 2008; Marks et al., 2011). According to Ajzen and Timko (1986), perceived control is superior to a general health locus of control when assessing for correlation with corresponding behaviors (see also Ajzen, 2005). In general, individuals attempt a behavior to the extent that their belief in their capacity to achieve allows them to do so.

Ajzen (2005) argued that attitudes and personality traits predispose cognitive responses and overt behavior related to the attitude. He asserted that in theory, one would assume a consistency in human affairs because inconsistency is psychologically uncomfortable. However, research indicates significant behavioral inconsistencies depending upon situations. Ajzen referred to this phenomenon as *consistency dilemma* (Ajzen, 2005). Ajzen suggested that not all behaviors, such as drinking alcohol, are as simple as the will to control the behavior, leading to the idea that behavior is a reflection of an individual's perception of behavioral control determined by the past experiences

(positive or negative) with that behavior (Marks et al., 2011). According to Ajzen (1991), an intention captures the facets of motivation that influence one's behavior and the effort one is willing to expend to perform the behavior. The inclusion of perceived behavioral control may bypass or moderate an individual's intention, which explains why intentions do not predict behavior every time (Ajzen, 1991). According to a meta-analysis of 185 independent studies published through 1997 that utilized TPB and accounted for perceived behavioral control, findings indicated evidence to support the use of TPB when seeking to predict intention and behavior (Armitage & Conner, 2001), adding credence to the use of TPB for this study.

In addition to perceived behavioral control, attitudes are linked with subjective normative beliefs and confidence in one's ability to perform a specific act (McMahon et al., 2014). Subjective norms are determined by what an individual perceives is important according to others in relation to specific behaviors or by what behaviors an individual perceives will attain approval or disapproval from their friend group (Champion & Skinner, 2008; Hoxmeier et al., 2018; Montaño & Kasprzyk, 2008; Sundstrom et al., 2018). An individual's attitude toward a behavior is one of three factors necessary to consider when understanding an individual's intention to engage in a behavior, such as bystander intervention. Therefore, to understand how to encourage individuals to actively engage in bystander intervention, one must understand the attitudes held toward bystander intervention as related to the prevention of sexual violence (McMahon et al., 2014).

Researchers have used the TPB to examine programs that address sexual assault on college campuses. Sundstrom et al. (2018) applied the TPB conceptual framework in the development and evaluation of an evidenced-based intervention campaign on a college campus to address sexual assault. The *It's Your Place* campaign was used to expose college students to messages related to sexual violence and bystander intervention. The study data were collected for 3 months to examine the relationship between college students' attitude toward intervening as a bystander, perceived behavioral control toward being a bystander, and self-reported intentions to intervene if participants observed a potential sexual assault. Multiple regression results showed that the TPB constructs (attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) significantly predicted intent to intervene. Specifically, participants whose attitudes toward bystander intervention were positive, indicating not only that it was an accepted norm but that they had control related to the decision and ability to intervene, were significantly more likely to report intentions to intervene as a bystander. Additionally, viewing the campaign significantly impacted students' attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The campaign was noted as believable and positive, prompting discussion with friends about bystander intervention. As a result of the campaign, 84% reported that they were motivated to act, with some who engaged in prosocial behaviors (i.e., intervened to prevent sexual assault and reported sexual assault).

Also informed by TPB, Hoxmeier et al. (2018) asserted that to establish effective programs on college campuses, it is imperative to understand the influence of bystander

intervention. Using the Sexual Assault Bystander Behavior Questionnaire, which examines subjective norms that support intervening, perceived behavioral control to intervene, attitudes toward intervening, and intent towards future invention, Hoxmeier et al. found that students who were willing to intervene reported significantly greater perceived behavioral control than non-interveners. Additionally, results indicated that those willing to intervene had more prosocial subjective norms than non-interveners and greater intent to intervene in the future; therefore, they concluded that the TPB framework increases understanding of the influences of bystander intervention and effectively explains health-related behaviors (i.e., actions that reduce health risk or improve health and safety outcomes).

Similarly, Cotto-Negron (2019) examined the TPB framework related to sexual assault and bystander intervention. They examined the relationship between TPB constructs and the effectiveness of a sexual violence prevention campaign on a college campus on bystander intervention. Results indicated that all constructs had a significant effect on intention to intervene such that the higher scores on attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control were significantly more likely to indicate an intent to intervene as a bystander. These results support previous research that also indicated attitudes towards intervention played a significant role in intention and behavior (Banyard, 2008; Banyard & Moynihan, 2011; McMahon et al., 2014). Expanding on previous research, however, the study also showed that attitude was the strongest predictor of intention to intervene, followed by subjective norms, then perceived behavioral control (Cotto-Negron, 2019). In the current study, the theory of planned

behavior was applied to understand attitudes toward bystander intervention in the social context of normative beliefs (e.g., traditional gender roles and rape myth acceptance) and sexual violence against women (Chapleau & Oswald, 2013; Hayes et al., 2016; McMahon et al., 2014; Young et al., 2016).

Feminist Theory

The feminist movement can be attributed to many women throughout history, dating back to 1848, but shifting social norms seemed most noticeable in the early 1960s. Specifically, Betty Friedan's (1963) book *The Feminine Mystique* provided a new perspective that challenged the social norms associated with a women's role in society, leading a newer generation of women to reject specific gender roles/relations (e.g., sexuality) associated with the previous generations (History, Art, & Archives, 2007). Feminist theory is not monolithic; there is more than one theoretical approach (e.g., socialist, liberal, postmodern, radical) to explaining women's social relationship to men (Tong, 1989). However, all feminist theories agree that gender roles/relations (e.g., sexuality) are defined by hegemonic male supremacy within patriarchal culture (MacKinnon, 1989).

In particular, radical feminist theory is used to examine the root causes of women's second-class status, asserting that misogyny underpins socially constructed power relations that entitle males access, on-demand, to female bodies. According to radical feminist theorists, this entitlement makes it difficult to claim sexual aggression is not just sex and that if sex took place, then female consent must have been granted (MacKinnon, 1987). If males are entitled to sexual access, then rape does not exist, and

females who claim to have been raped must have asked for it, deserved it, or lied about it. This is the belief system that informs rape mythology; those who endorse rape myths would not likely intervene should they witness a sexual assault.

Researchers have used the feminist theory to examine the prominence of sexual assault on college campuses. Boyle et al. (2017) examined archival data from 413 universities to determine what factors explain the variation in reporting or underreporting of rape on campus. Boyle et al. found that more rapes were reported on campuses with a more prominent feminist presence and anti-violence activism. This suggests that women feel safer to report in an environment less likely to accept rape myths. Conversely, Mendez (2020) suggested that the universities' emphasis on liability and current approaches, including Title IX policies and procedures, create an environment that silences survivors. Mendez used the Larry Nassar case at Michigan State University to highlight the system that minimized and dismissed many reports of sexual abuse by Nassar from female student athletes. Administrators, staff, and police failed to act on the accusations, not believing the young women and suggesting that they were confused, which ultimately led to over 150 female student athletes known to be sexually assaulted by Nassar.

Although feminist theory does not necessarily inform the current study, the examination of sexual assault grew from an attempt to understand the psychopathology of rapists in the 1950s (McDermott et al., 2015). McDermott's et al. (2015) analysis of 121 articles addressing sexual assault in college indicated that many studies related to sexual assault perpetration also included concepts such as gender roles, men, and masculinity.

The feminist perspective approaches sexual assault as a systemic problem due to men's socialization, rather than a problem attributed to individual psychopathology (McDermott et al., 2015). Thus, feminist theory helps to define key constructs relevant to the study that when incorporated enhances our understanding of the beliefs and attitudes some college students hold related to rape. Rape culture, rape myths, and rape myth acceptance will be discussed throughout the study as they provide a basis for conceptualization.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

Rape Culture

Rape culture can be defined as a violent landscape in which primary factors are the man's will and women's fear, the ultimate test to his superior strength and conquest (Brownmiller, 1975). Similarly, rape culture is the fear of sexual assault that takes up psychic space in a women's daily life (Buchwald, 1993). Furthermore, it is a culture of intimidation to censor a woman's behavior and undermine her confidence, restricting independence. The concept of rape culture emerged primarily in response to feminist theorists examining the psychopathological and sociological aspects of rape etiology (Brownmiller, 1975; Buchwald et al., 1993; Burt, 1980). Rape is conceptualized as an issue of power, control, and violence, manifesting through overarching concepts of societal norms, gender roles, and hypermasculinity (i.e., male dominance and aggression) (Brownmiller, 1975; Buchwald et al., 1993; Burt, 1980; McMahon, 2005). Rape is also a violent expression of hate toward women (Smart, 1977).

Men convicted of rape demonstrate greater psychopathology (Carvalho & Nobre, 2019). Specifically, college-age men who had committed sexual violence against women

displayed more hostility, according to their scores on the five-factor model of personality (also referred to as the Big 5). Other research indicated that hostile masculinity, misperception of sexual cues, and sexist beliefs about women lead to sexual assault perpetration (Abbey et al., 2011; McDermott, et al., 2015). McDermott et al. (2015) reviewed 80 of 121 total articles related to sexual assault and men's hostile attitudes toward women and violence. They asserted that there was an abundance of evidence to conclude that hostile masculinity played a vital role in sexual violence. Of note was the Murnen et al. (2002) meta-analysis examining hostile masculinity, which included 39 studies with male college students. Strong effect sizes were found in relation to hypermasculinity, rape myth acceptance, hostility toward woman, and dominance and power over women.

The feminist framework utilizes the perspective of the victim or survivor but also expands from the individual to examine social and cultural influences (McMahon, 2005). Research indicates that rape culture is perpetuated through a society's general tolerance of sexual violence and acceptance of rape myths, social norms, attitudes, and practices (Aronowitz et al., 2012; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014; Dills et al., 2016). Aronowitz et al. (2012) examined social-cognitive precursors (e.g., knowledge, attitudes, and social norms) in relation to sexual behavior and rape myth acceptance. The results from an online survey, which included 237 college student participants, demonstrated that those who had more sexual knowledge were significantly less likely to accept rape myths; however, males were significantly more likely to accept social norms regarding sexual behaviors and had significantly higher rape myth acceptance compared

to females. Dills et al. (2016) advocated for the social ecological model to prevention efforts, asserting the necessary connection between the individual's need for knowledge, training and skills, and societal factors or influences such as gender violence and sexism. Furthermore, they encouraged the promotion of social norms that protect against violence by mobilizing men and boys as allies.

Rape Myths and Rape Myth Acceptance

Rape myths are a feminist concept, introduced in the 1970s to describe distorted cultural beliefs that were thought to be at the foundation of sexual aggressions enacted against females; it was not until the 1970s that rape and its associated myths became a social issue rather than a personal problem (Edwards et al., 2011). Rape myths are attitudes and beliefs held about rape, justifying offenders' behavior, minimizing the impact of rape on victims, and blaming victims for rape occurrence (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) asserted that rape myths are widely and persistently held, although they are generally false; they are intended to deny or justify male sexual aggression towards women and maintain existing cultural gender arrangements. Some examples of rape myths include: "if a girl doesn't say "no," she can't claim rape," "when girls go to parties wearing slutty clothes, they are asking for trouble," "she asked for it," "he didn't mean to," "it wasn't really rape," and "she lied" (McMahon, 2010, McMahon et al., 2014). Research has identified key constructs, such as rape myth acceptance, to examine attitudes and beliefs common to rape culture and perpetrators of sexual violence.

Rape myth acceptance is measured by psychometric tools, such as the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, which provides insight into an individual's beliefs about rape based on the rape myths the individual endorses (Payne et al., 1999). Research also indicates that there is a relationship between rape myth acceptance and gender (Hayes et al., 2016; Hayes et al., 2013; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). In a study of 351 undergraduates (31.3% male and 68.7% female), Hayes et al. (2013) analyzed the relationship between gender and rape myth acceptance, controlling for race and previous victimization. Results showed that men were significantly more likely than women to endorse rape myths. In other research, although men were more likely than women to express beliefs in support of rape myths overall, acceptance of specific rape myths such as false allegations, were not significantly different for men and women (Edwards et al., 2011).

Rape Myth Acceptance and the Role of Media

Some research suggests that rape myths are perpetuated by media (Edwards et al., 2011; Gavey & Gow, 2001; Kahlor & Eastin, 2011; Ryan, 2011). Edwards et al. (2011) suggested that the media play a role by highly publicizing situations where there was evidence to suggest a false allegation and/or highlighting cases that resulted in acquittals, leading media consumers to believe that women falsely accuse men who when tried for rape are acquitted. Media representation contributes to the lack of difference between men and women regarding specific rape myths. According to Edwards et al. (2011), availability bias, also known as availability heuristic, refers to the cognitive process whereby individuals rely on recent or immediate examples when evaluating a topic or concept. In this case, they argued that the highly publicized cases of women falsely

accusing men of rape are example of relying on the availability heuristic. Thus, the media consumption of highly publicized sexual assault cases leads women and men alike to believe that women lie about rape. Similarly, Gavey and Gow (2001) examined media texts of reported false rape allegations from 1995 to 1999 and found only one article that could be deemed neutral in reporting. They argued that the framing of cases perpetuates the rape myth of women lying about rape, hindering progress made by feminist challenges to the broader social and historical concept of rape.

The media are a macrosystem via which images and storylines shape individuals' beliefs, perpetuating cultural norms (Kahlor & Eastin, 2011; Kahlor & Morrison, 2007). Content in television and movies that depict rape often support rape myths (Brison, 1992; Bufkin & Escholz, 2000; Edwards et al., 2011). Edwards et al. (2011) cited the high prevalence in television dramas with storylines depicting women "asking" or "wanting" to be raped and lying about being raped. Recent popular television dramas that depict such storylines are HBO's *Game of Thrones* and the Netflix series *Unbelievable*. Additionally, Ryan (2011) argued that sexual scripts portrayed in the media foster beliefs that glorify masculinity and objectify women, for example the television series, *Baywatch*, that ran 1989-2001 and was remade as an action-comedy film in 2017. Both the television show and film portray the stereotypical masculine man with a muscular build who is a strong leader of the beach lifeguards. The other lifeguards are typically women with tiny waists and large breasts often seen running in their swimsuits with their breasts bouncing captured in slow motion and/or close ups, reducing women to their body parts.

Brinson (1992) analyzed the content of 26 prime-time television dramas to determine frequency of rape myths and found 1.54 rape myth types occurred during an average storyline. Specifically, the use of rape myths per storyline line averaged 5.08 uses versus 3.27 uses of challenges to rape myths and repeated use of rape myths, such as the victim asked for it, wanted it, or lied about it were noted in the rape storylines. Additionally, there was no significant difference in the use of these rape myths between the male and female characters depicted in the storylines (Brinson, 1992).

Kahlor and Morrison (2007) expanded upon the research by examining television consumption (i.e., amount of time spent watching television) among college women and their perceptions of rape accusations. In a sample of 96 undergraduate women, rape myth acceptance and perception that rape accusations are false was analyzed in relationship to television use. Multiple regression results demonstrated a significant positive relationship between television use and rape myth acceptance such that the more television watched, the more likely women accepted rape myths. There was also a significant positive relationship found between amount of television watched and perceived false rape accusations (Kahlor & Morrison, 2007). Further supporting the notion that television is an influencer of social norms that fosters a tolerance of violence against women, Kahlor and Eastin (2011) examined the media influence on the perception of rape. Using a sample of 1,064 respondents, they analyzed the influence of media on rape culture, concluding that media contributed to endorsement of rape myth beliefs.

In addition to television, Giraldi and Monk-Turner (2017) suggested that social media provide a public forum for sexism and rape culture on a college campus. An

example of this is depicted in a meme: there is an image of a caveman and a caption of "No dates, no talking. Hit her on the head and take her home- Best Era Ever," which received 750,000 likes on Facebook. Hildebrand and Najdowski (2015) also suggested that rape culture is legitimized through other forms of media portrayals of women "wanting" it and downplaying sexual aggression toward women, as well as objectification of women. For example, the song by Robin Thicke called *Blurred Lines* was named Song of the Summer in 2013 and held a spot on the weekly Top Billboard for 12 weeks straight. The chorus of the popular song suggests that men can interpret sexual situations as they please – "*and that's why I'm gon'take a good girl. I know you want it. You're a good girl. Can't let it get past me…The way you grab me. Must wanna get nasty*." Such messages obliterate the significance of sexual assault and encourage victim blaming (Hildebrand & Najdowski, 2015).

According to Fountain (2008), newspaper portrayal of rape cases also influences rape myth acceptance. Using three separate vignettes, Fountain surveyed 127 participants to determine four factors: blame, responsibility, control, and accountability. Results indicated that news stories that portray the victims negatively led to increased victim blaming compared to stories that portray the perpetrator negatively or a controlled, unbiased story. Victim blaming is when someone holds the belief that the victim is at least partially responsible for the assault due to behavioral choices, such as drinking alcohol (Eigenberg & Garland, 2008). Victim blaming is among the rape myths that focus on female behaviors leading to victimization (Burt, 1980; Edwards et al., 2011).

Another example of media shaping perception and contributing to rape myths is seen in the Kobe Bryant case. Kobe Bryant was a basketball player for the Los Angeles Lakers when he was accused of sexually assaulting a woman. According to Franuik et al. (2008) there were hundreds of articles written about the case and published in newspapers and on the internet in the fourteen months preceding the trial. The study used 156 unique articles from 76 different news sources and the articles were coded for endorsement of seven rape myths. Only thirteen of the articles included statements that countered rape myths. Sixty-two participants, 18 males and 44 females, were randomly assigned to read one of two fictitious articles. One article included eleven statements that endorsed rape myths and the other included nine statements that countered rape myths. Franiuk et al. (2008) found that the participants were more likely to believe Kobe Bryant was not guilty of rape when exposed to the rape myth-endorsing article compared to those exposed to the article countering rape myths.

Sexual Assault

In the late 1960s, feminists began advocating for rape law reform, believing that changing the legal term *rape* to the more general *sexual assault* would increase the incidence of women reporting the assault (Clay-Warner & Burt, 2005; Searle & Berger, 1987). Using a general term broadened the definition of rape, initially including only penile-vaginal penetration between unmarried persons and a perpetrator's use of force. Recognizing sexual assault as an act without consent and including variations of unwanted acts, such as penile penetration into any body part, oral sexual acts, or use of an

object to penetrate, gave women personal authority over their bodies even if married (Horney & Spohn, 1991).

With the pervasiveness of rape culture perpetuated by rape myths, Reling et al. (2017) suggested that the United States had established culturally normative attitudes toward sexual assault. Furthermore, the occurrence of sexual violence is a major public health problem (Gidycz et al., 2007). According to Black et al. (2011), approximately 18% of American women reported having experienced forced sex and nearly 45% have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime. In addition, 37.4% of female rape victims reported the first incident occurred during emergence into adulthood or college years (Black et al., 2011). Estimates of sexual assault victimization on college campuses are as high as 28-38% for women and gender non-conforming students, with 22% of students experiencing at least one sexual assault incident since entering college (Mellins et al., 2017).

Sexual Assault and College

Sexual assault is a problem on college campuses (White House, 2014). The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2016) concurred that students of traditional college age (18-22 years) experience sexual victimization at higher rates than non-traditional age (23 years or older). However, sexual assault on college campuses is not a new problem; the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses was highlighted in a nationwide study that included 6,159 college students (3,187 females and 2,972 males) from thirty-two colleges (Koss et al., 1987). Koss et al. (1987) found that 25% of women in college identified as a victim of sexual assault or attempted sexual assault. Of the victims, 84%

reported being acquainted with the perpetrator and 57% were on a date. In addition, 60% reported that the assault occurred in a residence. This landmark study helped raise awareness of sexual assault occurrences on college campuses and diminish the misrepresentation that most rapes are perpetrated by strangers in a dark alley (Bridges, 1991).

Recent research indicates that one in four or five women in college has experienced sexual assault (Cantor et al., 2015; Dills et al., 2016; Krebs et al., 2016). Additionally, studies suggest that rates of sexual assault among college women are approximately three times greater than women in the general population (Hanson & Gidycz, 1993; Department of Justice, 2014). Furthermore, Mellins et al. (2017) found that the occurrence of sexual assault is greatest among first-year women and the risk of sexual assault is cumulative such that one in three women experience a sexual assault by senior year. According to Bhochhibhoya et al. (2019), approximately 35% of college students experience some manner of sexual violence, including rape attempts and completion by a dating partner, and women experience higher rates of sexual violence than men with women reporting 26% compared to 7% reported by men (Association of American Universities, 2019). Factors associated with increased risk of being sexually victimized include gender, frequency of "hookups," binge drinking, and lower assertiveness (i.e., a tendency to be passive and less direct about sexual needs or wants) (Bhochhibhoya et al., 2019; Mellins et al., 2017). Another emerging risk factor is the use of smartphone dating applications where the prevalence of sexual assault of males and females was 12.4% in one year and 14.2% over the lifetime (Choi et al., 2018).

Throughout the literature, research reports an association between a prevalence of alcohol use and sexual assault on college campuses (Foubert et al., 2019; LaBrie et al., 2009; Mellins et al., 2017). According to LaBrie et al. (2009), more than 65% of females reported they had been drinking alcohol at the time of the assault. Zapp (2014) found that at least 50% of sexual assaults on college campuses involved alcohol. Research also shows most perpetrators consume alcohol before committing a sexual assault (Testa et al., 2006). Foubert et al. (2019) found that 87% of alcohol-involved sexual assaults were perpetrated by a serial offender. Additionally, male student athletes and fraternity men were more likely than the general student population to use alcohol to perpetrate sexual assault.

Masculinity and Sexual Assault

According to Fahlberg and Pepper (2016), feminist scholars have long explored the association between masculine constructions and perpetration of sexual violence. Masculinity is a social construct that includes a set of practices designed to establish unequal power in gender relations between men and women and between men and other men (Connell, 1987). To sustain the gender hierarchy, men must either actively seek a dominant position, even among male peers, or experience marginalization or subordination; therefore, men face continuous competition with other men to attain power or status by exhibiting masculine traits that often lead to marginalization of women (Fahlberg & Pepper, 2016).

The traits associated with hegemonic masculinity include physical stature, physical and emotional self-control, assertiveness, competence, access to money, sexual

success, and holding positions of power (Barnett et al., 2017; Donaldson, 1993; Fahlberg & Pepper, 2016). According to Donaldson (1993), hegemonic masculinity is normalized and valorized through our social institutions where social success is defined by traits associated with masculinity but not femininity. At the core of hegemonic masculinity is heterosexuality where women exist not only as sexual objects for men, but also to provide sexual validation for them as *real* men (Donaldson, 1993). Hegemonic masculinity, therefore, is a cultural ideal attained only by men whose dominant behavior perpetuates and protects the gender hierarchy (Reddy et al., 2019).

Hypermasculinity is described as sexually aggressive males who view women only as sexual objects, believe that violence is manly, and experience danger as exciting (Vass & Gold, 1995). Corprew et al. (2014) found significant associations between hypermasculinity and the following four factors: dominance and aggression, sexual identity (i.e., heterosexuality), anti-feminine attitudes, and devaluation of emotions. Hypermasculine men also have a high regard for sexual prowess and a need to demonstrate that they are sexually skilled to overcome any sense of inferiority. Furthermore, they tend to view women as adversaries, believing that nonempathic or emotionally unconnected sexual acts display power over the expectedly submissive female (Vass & Gold, 1995).

Vass and Gold (1995) asserted that hypermasculinity played a role in sexual violence toward women, given their low tolerance for negative feedback. The high-hypermasculine participants were easier to anger and showed less empathy than the low-hypermasculine participants. The results suggested that hypermasculine men were at

increased risk for sexual aggression toward women. and Pepper (2016) added that sexual violence is a means to protect the patriarchal order and reaffirm the superiority or power over another. According to Martin et al. (2016) some higher education institutions promote a culture that exploits women. As men seek to assert their heterosexuality, in either physical or symbolic dominance over a woman's body, they achieve a sense of group belonging (Fahlberg & Pepper, 2016).

Perceived College Social Norms

Research suggests that the more educated an individual, the less likely the person is to accept rape myths (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010; Swope, 2014). However, the campus climate and lifestyle subtleties related to attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors require consideration (Hundersmarck, 2015). For example, there is a large body of research that suggests college students engage in higher amounts of binge drinking and other risk-taking behaviors that are associated with incidents of sexual assault (Aronowitz et al., 2012; Brenner & Swanik, 2007; Dills et al., 2016; Gervais et al., 2014; Hundersmarck, 2015; LaBrie et al., 2009; Messman-Moore et al., 2013; National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2016). Cooper (2002) found that sexual behavior choices become riskier as the consumption of alcohol increases. Similarly, Messman-Moore et al. (2013) asserted that alcohol related sexual assault on college and university campuses is widespread.

The rate of alcohol consumption has steadily risen over the years due to perceptions and beliefs about drinking behavior among college students. Wardell and Read (2013) noted the social norming of drinking among females, in particular. For

example, only 60% of females, who attended college in the 1950s, reported consuming alcohol once a week; however, in 2001, nearly 70% reported drinking ten or more times in a month. According to LaBrie et al. **(**2009), this may be, in part, due to females' perception that males find them more attractive when they can match their drinking. Regardless of the social norm, however, research indicates alcohol use contributes to rape myth acceptance. Hayes et al. (2016) examined alcohol use in the college setting and rape myth acceptance. Participants included 263 undergraduate students, with 84% from a larger university and 16% from a community college. The researchers found that heavy drinkers endorsed rape myths at significantly higher rates than light or non-drinkers, and as supported in other research, males displayed greater rape myth acceptance compared to females. However, there was no significant difference in rape myth acceptance found between the university and community college students.

In addition to rape myth acceptance, Gervais et al. (2014) examined the correlation between alcohol use, sexual objectification, and sexual violence. Of the 502 male college students who participated in the study, approximately half reported having been sexually aggressive toward women. Additionally, results indicated that heavy drinking was associated with sexual objectification of women and sexual violence. Furthermore, the higher quantities and frequency of alcohol consumption was significantly associated with more sexually violent perpetration, including coercion and rape.

Students who affiliate with a group or team on campus are more likely to conform to cultural norms that include alcohol consumption (Foster et al., 2014). According to

Hundersmarck (2015), football players were among the highest for binge drinking rates with drinking often beginning during their overnight visits during the recruitment phase. This is consistent with earlier research, indicating that college athletes engage in binge drinking or heavy episodic drinking more often than non-athletes (Turrisi et al. 2007; Yusko et al., 2008). Brenner and Swanik (2007) supported the notion that high-risk drinking behavior is more prevalent among the team sports than individual sports. Results indicated men's lacrosse, baseball, and women's lacrosse were among the teams with high-risk drinking behavior (football and basketball were not among the sports in the study). Additionally, Division I athletes were found to engage in elevated rates of high-risk drinking behavior compared to Division II and III athletes, with Division III participating 10.5% less in high-risk drinking behavior than Division I (Brenner & Swanik, 2007). Overall, studies indicated male student athletes consumed more alcohol and participated in more events conducive to binge drinking than female student athletes (Brenner & Swanik, 2007; Yusko et al., 2008).

Hookup Culture

Hookup culture refers to dating norms that have emerged on college campuses that encourage freedom in casual sexual contact, ranging from kissing to sexual intercourse, without commitment or emotional intimacy (Currier, 2013; Flack et al., 2015; Garcia et al., 2012; Wade, 2017). Studies have indicated that hookups are a predominant norm among college students with 60-87% of participants in studies reporting having hooked up at least once (Currier, 2013; Downing-Matibag & Geisinger, 2009; Flack et al., 2015; Garcia et al., 2012). According to Garcia et al. (2012), hookups

can occur in a variety of college settings with parties, bars, residence halls or fraternity houses, and spring break among the most reported settings. Flack et al. (2015) examined specific types of hookups in a study of 373 female students in their second, third or fourth years and found that approximately 67% of the participants engaged in hookups. Results also indicated that sorority women hooked up more frequently and had significantly higher rates of alcohol consumption than females not involved in Greek life. Additionally, there was no significant difference found between varsity athletes and nonathletes in hookup frequency or rate of alcohol consumption.

Paul and Hayes (2002) suggested that sexual assault and hooking up most often occur in related situations (i.e., individuals drinking alcohol and engaging socially at parties and bars). Therefore, the prevalence of hookup culture introduces another factor into the examination of sexual assaults on college campuses (Ford, 2017; Reling et al., 2018); other research supports this hypothesis, given the prevalence of alcohol use in hookups (Downing-Matibag & Geisinger, 2009; Fielder & Carey, 2010a; Flack et al., 2007; Flack et al., 2015; Ford, 2017; Garcia & Reiber, 2008; Garcia et al., 2012). According to Garcia and Reiber (2008), 33% of hookups were identified as unintentional and likely motivated by the use of alcohol or other drugs. Fielder and Carey (2010a) found that 64% of 118 female college students in their first semester reported using alcohol, with a median of three drinks, prior to their hookup. Furthermore, Downing-Matibag and Geisinger (2009) found that nearly 80% of the college students used alcohol to initiate their more recent hookup and 64% attributed the progression of sexual activity to alcohol.

Flack et al. (2007) examined risk factors for unwanted sex in the context of hookups among 178 college students. Results indicated that 77.8% experienced unwanted sex during a hookup. In a follow up study, Flack et al. (2015) found 77.6% of the females reported a hookup as the context for their sexual assault, with 88.1% indicating a hookup as the context for attempted rape and 85.54% for completed rape. In a similar study with 761 female college student participants, 50% reported experiencing at least one unwanted sexual encounter (Garcia et al., 2012). Results further indicated that 70% of the participants experienced unwanted sex during a hookup. Other studies indicated that friend groups are less conscientious of risks and leave intoxicated friends at house parties or residence halls, where the assault is most often committed by someone known to the victim (McMahon, 2010; Messman-Moore et al., 2008; Reling et al., 2018).

Research suggests that hookup culture reinforces the heteronormative script of masculine pursuers, leaving females to be gatekeepers (Currier, 2013; Ford, 2017; Reling et al., 2018; Wade, 2017). For example, as referenced above, women friend groups are expected to watch over each other or avoid drinking alcohol to be aware and able to deny the male pursuer if she is uninterested. Furthermore, the elevated social status gained from hookups is most often associated with men, whereas women often experience stigmatization and/or must contend with being negatively labeled (Currier, 2013; Reling et al., 2018). According to Ford (2017), it is a sexual double standard by which women are not only judged more pejoratively for sexual behaviors, but also experience pressure by men to advance in sexual acts beyond what they want.

According to Garcia et al. (2012), the basis of hooking up is found in the "uncommitted nature of the sexual encounter." Other than the socially normed agreement of no commitment (i.e., no expectation to call or see each other again) after the sexual encounter, hookups are ambiguous. Boundaries are unclear and behaviors that may otherwise be perceived as sexual assault are overlooked, dismissed, or ignored. Further highlighting the ambiguity of hookup culture, Tinkler et al. (2016) suggested common forms of sexual assault, such as unwanted touching and kissing, are often dismissed or ignored when in a public drinking setting. In their study, which included in-depth interviews of 197 men and women residing in two college towns, researchers examined patterns in alcohol consumption, college party attendance, and frequency of bar, club, and other public drinking venue attendance. Findings indicated that young adults normalized and minimized sexual aggression within the public drinking settings, thereby perpetuating norms related to gender that permit male aggression in the pursuit of women's attention or affection in these settings. Ford (2017) also suggested that through interactions during hookups, men place women in categories, such as sluts or girlfriend material, which stem from sexist stereotypes and may result in sexual assault perpetration.

Reling et al. (2018) asserted that research indicates commonalities between hookup culture and widespread rape myths that perpetuate heteronormative sexual scripts; therefore, the endorsement of hookup culture and rape myth acceptance share many predictors. A study of 422 college students found a positive association between rape myth acceptance and belief that hookups are not only harmless but also strengthen

social status. Specifically, beliefs that hookups strengthen one's social status was a significant predictor of rape myth acceptance, with no significant difference in male or female respondents. In a follow up study of 376 college students, the above findings were supported; however, unlike in the initial study, Reling et al. (2018) substantiated previous research that female students are less endorsing of hookup culture.

Intercollegiate Athletics Culture

College athletes are not a monolithic category (McMahon, 2005; McMahon, 2007; Navarro & Tewksbury, 2017). There are many subgroups that include the different divisions within the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), contact sports versus non-contact, and revenue producing sports versus non-revenue producing. Therefore, further examination is needed among the various athletic subgroups to obtain a more comprehensive view on the issue of sexual assault (McMahon, 2005). Additionally, it is important to gain an understanding of the contributing factors (e.g., masculinity) gleaned from the broader research and whether they are significant in the variety of student athlete subgroups.

According to the NCAA (2015), the profile and expectations of the institution, as well as the student athlete, differ among divisions. For example, Division I student athletes accept scholarships from the institution to play their sport and the level of competition is significantly higher than for Division III student athletes. Division III student athletes do not attend their institution on scholarship for the sport and emphasis is typically on student (i.e., academics) rather than on the competitive sport. Among student athletes, there is a culture that includes a hierarchy (McMahon, 2005). The general

category of student athlete forms the base of the hierarchy where the top is reserved for the stars on the various men's teams, specifically the revenue producing sports such as football and basketball. Their athlete status often equates to privilege and special treatment, thus producing a sense of entitlement (McMahon, 2005).

In addition to the privileged status, college student athletes are more susceptible to the pressures of stardom, which include media representation, as evidenced by the NCAA's latest decision to allow student athletes to be paid for the use of their image, merchandise, and endorsements (NCAA, 2019). When cases involving student athletes and sexual assault make headlines, a result of their stardom, it has consequences for college student athletes in general. The U.S. Department of Education and Office for Civil Rights (2011) contributed a *Dear Colleague Letter* highlighting the importance of sexual violence programs for coaches and student athletes and in 2014, the "It's on Us" campaign was created to raise awareness and reduce sexual violence on college campuses (the White House, 2014). Per the guidelines, college student athletes are a targeted population required to participate in educational workshops on sexual assault and violence prevention, given the research that suggests they are an at-risk group (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014; Dills et al., 2016; the White House, 2014; Zapp, 2015). Despite these efforts, sexual assault remains prevalent on college campuses (Association of American Universities, 2019)

According to Zapp (2015), intercollegiate athletes are among the unhealthy minority, specifically related to a heightened risk for perpetration of sexual violence. Zapp (2015) utilized a sexual assault education course and surveys to explore college

student attitudes, experiences, and behaviors in relations to sexual assault and violence. Over 530,000 students on over 400 college campuses in the United States, with 66% of the students being first years required to engage in the course, participated in the study. Based on responses related to attitudes and behaviors, students were placed into a healthy (65%) or unhealthy (35%) profile in effort to inform campus programming efforts. Although social desirability may have played a role in the responses of the those in the healthy category, results indicated that those in the unhealthy profile reported significantly higher rates of behaviors, such as pressuring or forcing sexual contact without consent and engaging in high-risk alcohol use.

Additional studies show college student athletes have higher rape myth acceptance or suggest they are among an at-risk group to perpetuate sexual violence (Humphrey &Kahn, 2000; McMahon, 2010; McMahon, 2005; Wiscombe, 2012; Young et al., 2016). McMahon (2005) found that although college student athletes did not directly blame the victim of sexual violence, there was expressed belief that women put themselves in the situation by drinking alcohol or inviting the assault by flirting and dressing provocatively. Wiscombe (2012) found that female athletes have a higher acceptance of rape myths than female non-athletes do. The culture of sports is naturally competitive and dominance is key to winning. These are attributed to masculine traits; therefore, females garner more social acceptance within the culture if they hold thoughts and beliefs associated with masculinity.

While some studies indicate higher rates of rape myth acceptance, other research suggests college athletes are not homogeneous (Humphrey & Kahn, 2000; Sawyer et al.,

2002). Humphrey and Kahn (2000) completed a study to assess risk of sexual assault posed by male members of athletic teams. The researchers first asked a sample of upper-class students to report their perception of risk, rating the extent to which the parties of 16 male teams (varsity and club) created an atmosphere conducive to sexual assault. Based on the ratings, the male teams were classified as low-risk or high-risk. Next, the researchers measured the levels of sexual aggression of the members of all the athletic teams. Results showed that members of the perceived high-risk athletic teams reported committing significantly more sexual aggression than did members of perceived low-risk teams. In addition, members of the perceived high-risk teams had higher scores on hostility toward women. Specifically, the results indicated that members of the two teams perceived to be high-risk reported significantly higher sexual aggression than the members of low-risk teams, with no significant difference between the low-risk teams and nonathletes. Additionally, members of the high-risk teams reported greater hostility toward women than the low-risk teams and nonathletes, with no significant difference between low-risk and nonathletes. Lastly, members of the high-risk teams endorsed significantly higher peer support for sexual assault against women than the low-risk and nonathletes (Humphrey & Kahn, 2000).

Sawyer et al. (2002) conducted a study among five institutions and 704 student athletes to examine rape myth acceptance among Division I and II athletes. Results determined that rape myth acceptance was significantly higher among male athletes compared to female athletes. Younger athletes (first year and sophomores versus juniors/seniors) and those in team sports versus individual sports also had significantly

higher rape myth acceptance. However, there was no statistical difference between high revenue generating sports (e.g., football and basketball) and non-revenue generating sports. Although division was not a predictor of rape myth acceptance among male student athletes, it was among female student athletes. Division I females were found to have significantly higher levels of rape myth acceptance than Division II females. Sawyer et al. (2002) hypothesized that the difference was a result of Division I female athletes adopting masculine attitudes due to their highly competitive environment.

McMahon (2007) found comparable results related to Division I female athletes who endorsed significantly greater victim-blaming attitudes than their male counterparts. Additionally, Division I female athletes reported significantly higher self-esteem and confidence in their abilities, believing they were less likely to be rape victims. Other studies supported this with findings indicating that athletes reported lower rates of sexual victimization than nonathletes, suggesting that athletic participation reduces risk of victimization during the college years for female athletes due to higher levels of confidence and team comradery that guards them against victimization (Fasting et al., 2008; Ford, 2017).

Young et al. (2016) found that male college student athletes had a significantly higher report of traditional gender role attitudes than nonathletes and those who participated in team sports had greater acceptance of rape myths. Additionally, athletic participation predicted sexual coercion with athletes 77% more likely than nonathletes to report engaging in sexual coercion. The study examined the associations between attitudes towards women, rape myth acceptance, and sexual coercion among athletes and

nonathletes and included male student athletic teams in both recreational and intercollegiate sports. Participants were from a Division I university; however, the majority of the final sample identified as recreational, with only 29 out of the 188 athletes being part of a NCAA Division I sport. Therefore, the findings are at least partly due to the masculine ideologies that are embedded in competitive sport or athletic environments, in general (Young et al., 2016).

Navarro and Tewksbury (2017), however, supported the notion that Division I athletics culture differed from Division II and III. They suggested that athletes not be categorized as one group because subgroups exist, even within a division, which would require an examination of other variables such as demographics, lifestyle, and social characteristics. The study analyzed 21 Division I college institutions to compare rape myth acceptance between student athletes and non-athletes. Although nonathletes reported a higher rejection of rape myths, results indicated no statistical difference between athletes and nonathletes, except for on one rape myth acceptance subscale, "she asked for it" where athletes endorsed significantly higher acceptance.

Similar to other studies, gender was the strongest and consistent predicator of rape myth acceptance, although not a significant predictor for athletes (Navarro & Tewksbury, 2017). Compared to nonathletes, the subscales "he didn't mean to" and "she lied" were statistically significant for athletes; however, the relevance of lifestyle (e.g., alcohol use) and social characteristics (e.g., knowing a victim) were highlighted. For example, athletes who were non-Greek members and engaged in higher alcohol use were more likely to endorse the belief that the rape incident was fabricated than athletes who did not engage

in that lifestyle. Additionally, athletes who were Greek affiliated and knew a victim of sexual assault were less accepting of rape myths in general and especially myths related to "he didn't mean to." Navarro and Tewksbury (2017) concluded that lifestyle and social characteristics influence the acceptance of rape myths among athletes.

Masculinity and Sport

According to Steinfeldt et al. (2016), male athletes are not only encouraged to be aggressive, but they are also viewed as privileged and socially dominant. Thus, research suggests that gender roles, and specifically masculinity, are factors in rape myth acceptance and attitudes towards bystander intervention. Gage (2008) suggested that adherence to traditional gender role beliefs and attitudes are associated with sexual violence towards women, with males exerting a superior position over females. Adams, Anderson, and McCormack (2010) asserted that sports are highly segregated and male-only sports often encourage hypermasculine discourse that include misogyny. McMahon (2005) found that student athletes most common response to the definition of masculinity as being "tough." Tough was both a mental and physical attribute, with an ability to sacrifice, "take it from the coach," and an absence of femininity. Masculinity was also described as strength and dominance, including holding those traits in intimate relationships and family. Evidence of sexual prowess was noted as part of demonstrating masculinity as well, with "locker room talk" related to descriptions of sexual activity with women (McMahon, 2005).

Certain sports, such as football and basketball, thrive on masculine norms and student athletes often embody aggressive traits due to external pressures and positive

reinforcement by teammates and coaches (Steinfeld et al., 2012). Locke and Mahalik (2005) found that conforming to masculine norms encourages negative outcomes, such as alcohol abuse and sexually aggressive behavior. Additionally, Sullivan (1993) suggested sex is within the competitive arena and there is motive to "score." There is an assumption that this factor, in addition to the competitiveness associated with drinking behavior in college, supports an environment that objectifies women.

Prevention and Education

According to Orchowski et al. (2012), 72% of sexual assaults take place when the victim is intoxicated, meaning informed consent is not given. To gain true or informed consent, the following are required: both individuals are emotionally and intellectually equal, honesty, understanding, permission to disagree or refuse without penalty or harm, and both individuals truly understand what is going to happen (Kahn, 2001). However, individuals are rarely educated about this prior to their first year in college, which is why advocates suggest awareness and education begin in middle school or high school (Break the Cycle, 2014).

When sexual assaults on college campus began to be highlighted as a problem by the White House in 2014, researchers found that the best approach to reducing sexual assaults on campus was to raise awareness and provide education (Center for Disease and Prevention, 2014; Dills et al., 2016). With many asserting that sexual assault is a problem on college campuses, feminists called attention to rape culture (i.e., environments where rape myth acceptance is high and social norms include endorsement of hegemonic masculinity, including traditional gender roles, such as in fraternities and athletics) and

advocated a response to rape culture on campuses (Sharp et al., 2017). In attempt to reduce sexual assaults on college campuses and be compliant with federal Title IX mandates (Office of Civil Rights, 2011), campuses have engaged their students in sexual violence education programs. To date, many prevention programs use a generalized format and treat college students interchangeably (i.e., they do not tailor the material to a specific audience within the college student population). However, prevention literature suggests that the material has limitations and, therefore, is not generalizable to all students. There is a need to pay attention to cultural differences among subgroups (e.g., student athletes in different divisions within the NCAA), and tailor prevention programs responsive to those differences, rather than using a universal (i.e., a one size fits all) approach (Anderson & Whitson, 2005; Holtz et al., 2018; McMahon et al., 2014).

Bystander Intervention

Programs, such as StepUp, developed by the University of Arizona in partnership with the NCAA were created and studies related to bystander intervention indicate that a potential barrier to a person's decision to intervene in a sexual assault situation is their acceptance of rape myths (Banyard, 2008; McMahon, 2010). Reducing sexual assaults on campus takes a comprehensive approach. Some education and prevention advocates suggest colleges need to target men's rape supportive attitudes and behavior (Foubert & Cowell, 2004; Foubert & Perry, 2007; Katz & Moore, 2013). Others assert that colleges should use an empathy-based program to appeal to men as helpers or bystanders in the prevention of sexual assault (Foubert et al., 2010; Moynihan et al., 2010; Moynihan et al., 2015).

Foubert et al. (2010) suggested that programs should not be presented in a coeducational fashion and programs that target a specific audience are more effective. In a study of an all-male sexual assault peer-education program, 90% of the first-year male population attended the program and 55% were part of the sample who completed surveys at the end of their sophomore year. Results indicated that 79% of participants noted that their attitude and/or behavior changed due to the participation in the program. Additionally, 46% reported attitude changes towards the use of alcohol, with about 61% of them noting a need to be cautious about sexual activity when alcohol is involved. Participants also reported that there was a change in understanding about rape and the seriousness associated, as well as the trauma women experience during and after a sexual assault. Behavioral changes were also reported with participants, to include prevention of sexual assaults, challenges to language that perpetuate rape culture, and not engaging in sexual activity when alcohol was involved.

According to McMahon et al. (2014), one approach to examining rape myth acceptance and sexual violence is to consider attitudes towards bystander intervention as it relates to specific situations. Bystander intervention is viewed on a continuum, allowing for intervention before, during, or after a sexual assault occurs. The opportunities for intervention involving a sexual assault situation are vast and involve distinct types of situations, ranging from a high-risk situation (e.g., an intoxicated woman being led away from a party by a male she just met) to situations that pose no immediate harm but support rape culture (e.g., comments or jokes that are sexist or promote violence against women) (McMahon & Banyard, 2012; McMahon et al., 2014; McMahon et al.,

2011). In addition, bystanders can seek to be proactive by engaging in training or becoming peer educators, as well as providing support to survivors after an incident (McMahon & Banyard, 2012).

Moynihan et al. (2015) evaluated an in-person bystander program that first-year college students participated in at two different universities. Results indicated that those who participated in the program during their first year were more likely to engage in bystander helping behavior than those who did not participate in the program. Additionally, those who participated in the program indicated significantly more proactive behaviors towards friends and party safety. Furthermore, women who participated in the program reported more types of helping behaviors for strangers than those who did not participate in the program. Overall, findings indicated positive behavior changes 12 months post participation in the bystander program. However, the results were based on self-report data not on an objective measure of actual behavior that occurred during that period. Additionally, data were not correlated to actual incidents on campus.

McMahon (2010) conducted an exploratory study with a sample of 2300 incoming college students during orientation to examine rape myths in relation to bystander intervention attitudes and behaviors. The rape myth subscales "*he didn't mean to"* and "*she lied"* had the highest mean scores, suggesting that the college students were victim blaming. Findings also showed that rape myth acceptance significantly reduced students' intentions to intervene as bystanders. Specifically, the rape myth subscale "*it's not really rape"* was shown to be the strongest predictor for bystander attitudes. Overall,

those students more willing to intervene were females, had previous rape education, and knew someone who had been sexually assaulted.

Jozkowski et al. (2019) examined the relationship between acute alcohol intoxication and effects on rape myth acceptance and bystander intent to intervene. The study extended the participation pool to include women based on the findings from Orchowski et al. (2016), which was a study of men only, concluding that those who engaged in heavy drinking were less likely to support bystander intentions. Jozkowski et al. (2019) completed the study in a lab with a randomly assigned control group (64 participants received a dose of 100-proof vodka and the other 64 received soda water). All participants listened to and read along with a sexual assault scenario where the woman was deemed intoxicated, and the man was sober. Participants then completed an interview and survey to assess their perceptions of the sexual assault. Results indicated that participants with higher rape myth acceptance, regardless of condition (intoxicated or sober) blamed the victim in the scenario more and were less likely to believe they were responsible to intervene. However, when controlling for rape myth acceptance, the intoxicated participants endorsed more victim blaming than the sober participants. Although findings showed that acute alcohol intoxication affected the perception of responsibility to intervene (i.e., a lower endorsement of responsibility) and victim blaming, there was no significant association between condition and perceived responsibility to intervene beyond the effect of rape myth acceptance.

According to Hoxmeier et al. (2017), there are significant gender differences in bystander intervention in relation to types of sexual assault risk situations. For example,

29.2% of men reported not intervening compared to 44.5% of women when they saw a group of students sexually intimidating/bothering someone in a parking lot or similar setting. Additionally, 40.7% of men compared to 24.4% of women reported directly confronting the situation. However, in three of the six bystander situations, participants overall reported a higher proportion of not intervening. Specifically, in one of the two most common opportunities to intervene when they "saw a guy taking a drunk girl back to his room," only 20.3% reported they did something to intervene. Further analysis found a significant difference in gender, with 23.1% of women compared to 15.5% of men who reported to have engaged in prosocial intervention. Additionally, when students "heard a friend say they planned to give alcohol to someone to get sex," 55.3% of women compared to 44.3% of men reported that they did something to intervene.

Contrary to McMahon's (2010) findings, McMahon et al. (2011) found that previous rape education was not a significant factor in willingness to intervene; however, there was consistency in the difference related to gender with females indicating more willingness than males to intervene. Although results did not indicate a significant difference among college student athletes, varsity high school athletes reported significantly less willingness to intervene than the nonathletes (McMahon et al., 2011). McMahon (2010) suggested college student athletes were an at-risk group for sexual violence, with results indicating a significant difference by gender. The study found that male athletes endorsed significantly higher rape myth acceptance and had significantly less positive bystander intervention attitudes than female athletes. In addition, the study also indicated that, in general, males were more accepting of rape myths and less positive

about bystander intervention than females. Therefore, additional research was recommended to account for the student athlete status variable.

McMahon et al. (2014) conducted a study using peer education theater for prevention of sexual violence on college campuses. A sample of 643 students completed both a pretest and posttest after attending the peer education theater; results indicated significant gender difference with females less accepting of rape myths and more positive toward bystander intervention than males, supporting previous research. However, there was no significant difference related to athlete status for either rape myth acceptance or bystander attitudes.

Summary and Conclusions

Although recent studies have begun to examine differences between college student athletes and nonathletes related to rape myth acceptance and bystander intervention, they are limited. Therefore, this study will address the gap in literature by examining the extent to which the specific types of rape myth acceptance, student status (athlete, nonathlete), and gender are related to the attitudes toward bystander intervention in specific situations (i.e., high-risk situations, post-assault support for victims, post-assault reporting of perpetrators, and proactive opportunities). The theory of planned behavior (TPB) will inform the study, asserting that an individual's behavior can be best predicted by their attitude and beliefs about the behavior, as well as their perception of social norms related to the behavior. The assertion that the student athlete subculture is not monolithic indicates that further research is necessary to garner a better understanding of the different attitudes and beliefs related to sexual assault, rape myth acceptance, and

bystander intervention. Some research indicates that student athletes more often endorse aggressive behavior and value masculinity and have a tendency towards rape myth acceptance compared to nonathletes. Other studies, however, found that athletic participation was a protective factor for female athletes and was not predictive of violent behavior, sexual aggression, or rape myth acceptance. Previous research has not specifically examined the distinct types of rape myth acceptance nor the specific situations in which bystander intervention can occur. Therefore, the extent to which the specific types of rape myth acceptance, student status (athlete, non-athlete), and gender are related to the attitudes toward bystander intervention in specific situations is unknown.

Chapter 3 will review the study's purpose and describe the research design and rationale, methodology, instrumentation, and operationalization of constructs, as well as identify the data analysis plan, research questions and hypotheses, threats to validity and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this quantitative, cross-sectional survey study was to investigate the relationship between acceptance of specific rape myths and attitudes toward bystander intervention in specific situations among Division III athletes and nonathletes on a college campus. Specifically, I aimed to determine the extent to which acceptance of specific rape myths, athlete status, and gender predict attitudes toward bystander intervention in four specific situations (i.e., high-risk situations, post-assault support for victims, post-assault reporting of perpetrators, and proactive opportunities). This study used archival data from a student survey on health and wellness to gain insight into factors related to attitudes toward bystander intervention (Honeycutt & Khodorkovskaya, 2018).

In this chapter, I will discuss the research design and rationale, methodology, population, sampling and sampling procedures, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, instrumentation and operationalization of constructs, data analysis plan, threats to external and internal validity, and ethical procedures. In the research design section, I will discuss the approach and process utilized to conduct the study, including the population and sampling strategy and data analysis plan. I will also describe and discuss the variables and measurement tools used for data collection and provide a rationale for their use. Lastly, I will describe the processes and procedures used in the original data collection and the secondary data I used and analyzed.

Research Design and Rationale

This study followed a quantitative nonexperimental survey design, with archival data gathered from a health and wellness survey at a small, private liberal arts institution designated as a Division III school for athletics. A cross-sectional design provides a "snapshot" view of results within a specific period and focuses on drawing inferences from existing differences between people, subjects, or phenomena (Hall, 2008; USC Libraries, 2021; Wang & Cheng, 2020). A health and wellness survey was designed to capture information related to various aspects of the student body. It was a unique, one-time survey conducted to understand the current campus climate, and participation was voluntary. Included in the survey were instruments to measure rape myth acceptance and attitudes toward bystander intervention convenient for use to investigate the relationship between rape myth acceptance and attitudes towards bystander intervention among Division III athletes and non-athletes on a college campus.

Multiple regression is an extension of linear regression used to predict the value of a dependent variable (DV) based on multiple independent variables (IV) or predictor variables, allowing the researcher to explain an association between variables independent and dependent variables (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Therefore, hierarchical multiple regression was used to evaluate the relative strength of student rape myth acceptance (total score and subscales: she asked for it, he didn't mean to, it wasn't really rape, and she lied), athlete status, and gender in predicting attitudes toward bystander intervention in four specific situations (i.e., high-risk situations, post-assault support for victims, post-assault reporting of perpetrators, and

proactive opportunities). Sequential/hierarchical multiple regression allows the researcher to enter the independent variables into the regression equation in steps in order of predictive power based on theoretical reasoning to determine the extent to which each independent variable or blocks of variables adds to the explained variance in a dependent variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Methodology

Population

This study included both athletes and nonathletes at a NCAA Division III university. In 2018, the university's registrar's office reported a total of 2,302 students (1,671 undergraduates and 631 graduates). The athletic department reported a total of 406 student athletes, with 81 student athletes in football, the largest student-athlete team. There were no graduate students reported on teams; all student athletes were undergraduates, comprising 24.3% of the undergraduate student body. According to the NCAA (2021), there were a total of 111,318 male and 80,701 female student athletes in Division III athletics during the 2018 year.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

The survey link was sent through the university email server to all students registered (approximately 2.300) during the Spring 2018 term, regardless of gender, race, and major. However, the university's total population is majority White, and the college is recognized for the arts and engineering programs. A non-random convenience sample resulted in 313 participants (approximately 13.6% of total student body), with 132 reporting involvement in varsity athletics (not including intramural or club sports).

The G*Power 3.1.9.7 software was used to conduct a power analysis and calculate recommended sample size for multiple regression using fixed model and R^2 deviation from zero (Faul et al., 2007). The values for multiple regression included an alpha level of 0.05, 7 predictor variables, anticipated medium effect size of 0.15, and desired statistical power of 0.95. The result was a recommended sample size of 144 participants (Faul et al., 2007). Anticipated effect size was determined by reviewing previous research on rape myth acceptance, which reported medium effect sizes (Banyard et al., 2009; Jozkowski et al., 2019). Banyard et al. (2009) reported a significant relationship between rape myth acceptance and gender, resulting in a partial $\eta^2 = .16$. In addition, Jozkowski et al. (2019) found a significant relationship between rape myth acceptance and victim blaming, where those who had higher rape myth acceptance blamed the victim more ($\eta^2 = .166$).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment was done using the campus email after obtaining approval from the university's Human Subjects Research Committee (HSRC). This included a reminder email each week for 3 weeks during the Spring 2018 term as well as notices posted in the daily campus announcements. The health and wellness survey included a broad range of factors such as physical health, mental health, alcohol use, substance use, self-efficacy, rape myth acceptance, previous participation in programs, bystander intervention, and demographic questions such as age, race, gender, year in college, and athlete status. Relevant to the current study, the health and wellness survey used the Illinois Rape Myth

Acceptance-Short Form to measure rape myth acceptance and Bystander Attitude Scale-Revised to measure attitudes toward bystander intervention.

During the Spring 2018 term, a link to the health and wellness survey was emailed to all students enrolled on the campus of a small, private liberal arts university located in the northeast United States. The email included a brief introduction to the health and wellness survey and a link to the survey. A link was created for the survey in CampusLabs and parameters were set to minimize the potential for an individual to complete the survey more than once. CampusLabs is a platform used in higher education settings, offering integrated software and assessment tools (CampusLabs, 2020). The CampusLabs link took students first to the informed consent where they answered "yes" or "no." The informed consent included the purpose of the survey, approximate time for completion, contact information for the staff members who collaborated on its development, estimated time of completion, a statement that all data would be kept anonymous and confidential with no identifying information, and contact information for the HSRC for questions related to integrity of the research. In addition, participants were informed of the potential benefits and consequences due to participation, such as feelings of discomfort, that they could refuse participation at any time by exiting the survey and provided the phone number for the campus's counseling services.

The survey took approximately 30–45 minutes to complete in its entirety. For this study, CampusLabs calculated an average completion time for the 313 participants at 37 minutes. At the end of the survey, students were redirected to a page to enter their name for a drawing for one of six $25 gift cards. Students also had an option to include their

name and professor who agreed to give extra credit in their class for completing the survey. Additionally, the athletic department separately offered to host a pizza party for the athletic team that had the highest percentage of participation. The original study was conducted by the university's wellness center where I was employed, and the university's Human Subjects Research Committee (HSRC) granted approval for me to use the data. There was no other follow up with the participants.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale-Short Form

The Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA) was used to measure the false attitudes and beliefs held due to a cultural phenomenon that was built to maintain a specific system that serves to deny, minimize, or justify sexual aggressions towards females by males (Payne et al., 1999). The original IRMA scale contains 45 items and used a 7-point Likert scale (1= *not at all agree* to 7= *very much agree*; Payne et al., 1999). Originally, there were 11 factors labeled and after a cluster analysis, factor analysis, and use of the structural equations model, results indicated that the following seven factors adequately conceptualized rape myth acceptance: *she asked for it; it wasn't really rape; he didn't mean to; she wanted it; she lied; rape is a trivial event;* and *rape is a deviant event.* To establish construct validity LISREL analyses were completed and indicated a good fit of the model, with the results being χ^2 (700, N=604) = 1311, GFI= .90, and AGFI= .88. Reliability was determined through Cronbach's Alpha with an overall α= .93 and subscales ranging from .74 to .84 (Payne et al., 1999).

Payne et al. (1999) continued evaluation of the IRMA scale, to include the short form (IRMA-SF), owing to concerns that the length of the original 45-item scale would limit its use. Their objective was to establish adequate internal consistency of the short-form with an alpha greater than .80 and to ensure it provided an accurate picture of the same rape myth domains of the 45-item scale. In creating the short-form, approximately half or just below half of the items were included from each of the seven subscales. The internal consistency of the short form was reported at an overall alpha of .87. The correlation between the 45-item and the 20-item short form was r (602) = .97, p < .001, demonstrating that the IRMA-SF was an adequate alternative to the original 40-item IRMA when measuring rape myth acceptance.

To establish additional construct validity, Payne et al. (1999) examined the correlations between scores on the IRMA and IRMA-SF and other related constructs including sex-role stereotyping, sexism, adversarial sexual beliefs, hostility toward women, and attitudes toward violence. The results showed that the rape myth acceptance scores were significantly and positively correlated with those other constructs. Correlation values ranged from r (174) = .47, p<.001 to r (174) = .74, p < .001. These results demonstrated that individuals with higher levels of rape myth acceptance also held more traditional sex role stereotypes, endorsed the notion that the relation of the sexes is adversarial, expressed more hostile attitudes towards women, and were more accepting of both interpersonal violence and violence in general. Thus, Payne et al. concluded that the IRMA and IRMA-SF demonstrated good psychometric properties and are reliable and valid measures of rape myth acceptance.

Bystander Attitude Scale-Revised

The Bystander Attitude Scale was used to measure attitudes or normative beliefs individuals hold and confidence in relation to performing a particular behavior (i.e., intervening to prevent sexual violence). The Bystander Attitude Scale- Revised (BAS-R) was originally based on a literature review, student interactions, consultation with experts, and meetings with undergraduate students, and those who work on a college campus with rape survivors (McMahon et al., 2014). The original 32-item BAS-R instrument was assessed using a sample of 951 incoming college students (McMahon et al., 2011). To refine the scales of the BAS-R instrument, minor revisions were made and the factor structure of the scales and reliability of the scales and subscales were evaluated using exploratory structural equation modeling (ESEM) (McMahon et al., 2014).

McMahon et al. (2014) also developed a shorter, 20-item version of the BAS-R, which was used in the health and wellness survey. McMahon et al. (2014) described the development of the modified, shorter version, choosing to delete 7 questions related to personal sexual encounters that were not strong indicators of bystander behaviors as conceptualized. However, they added 10 items to better balance the spectrum of opportunities for bystander intervention (e.g., low-risk, high-risk, post-assault, and proactive situations) (McMahon et al., 2014). The modified version contains 20 items, each with a different statement for bystander behavior, using a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (unlikely to very likely) for participants to indicate the likelihood of engaging in the behavior, such as “confront a friend who plans to give someone alcohol for sex” (McMahon et al., 2014).

To establish construct validity, a 4-factor analysis of the 20 items indicated that 11items demonstrated a very good model fit: x^2/df (17, N=2,028) = 13.82, p< .001; RMSEA= .08; CFI= .99; TLI= .97; WRMR= .67 (McMahon et al., 2014). These 11 items plus 5 newly added items, for a total of 16 items, created the following four subscales and corresponding Cronbach's alphas: high-risk situations (α= .82); post-assault situations (α= .72); post-assault reporting of perpetrators (α= .82); and proactive opportunities (α= .86) (McMahon et al., 2014).

Each of the 4 subscale categories presents scenarios to measure bystander attitudes. High-risk opportunities are defined as the attitudes toward situations where there was an immediate risk of sexual violence. Post-assault is defined as attitudes toward accompanying a victim to report the sexual assault to the police. Post-assault reporting of perpetrators is related to the bystander's attitude toward reporting a suspected assault to the police or authorities. Proactive opportunities are defined as attitudes toward situations where there was no risk posed to anyone but a willingness to be an active learner on topics related to sexual violence and "stand against it" (McMahon et al., 2014).

Data Analysis Plan

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 (IBM Corporation, 2017) will be used for data cleaning and screening, as well as the main analysis. Prior to conducting the hierarchical multiple regressions, I will evaluate the assumptions of normality, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity, outliers, linear relationships between variables, and quality of covariance matrices. Normality will be assessed using histograms and Q-Q plots and linear relationships will be examined using scatterplots.

Additionally, a scatterplot of residuals will be used to test for homoscedasticity. Multicollinearity will be assessed using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values and the Durbin-Watson *d* test will examine the independence of residuals.

Missing data (pattern and amount) will also be evaluated. With regression analysis, the default in all programs is to eliminate any cases with missing data on any of the variables (i.e., listwise deletion). As the amount of data that are missing increases, there can be a substantial reduction of sample size and a resulting loss of power (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The typical procedure for handling a small number of missing values that appear to be random is to simply drop those cases. Alternatively, if the missing data involves a larger number of cases and appears to be non-random another option is to estimate the missing values and use the estimates during data analysis. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) describe a number of estimate procedures that may be used. I anticipate that there will be few, if any, missing values in the archival data set. After evaluating assumptions and adjusting for any missing data, a hierarchical multiple regression will be conducted to assess the following research questions and hypotheses.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: To what extent does rape myth acceptance (total score), as measured by the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale-Short Form (IRMA-SF), relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the Bystander Attitude Scale-Revised (BAS-R), among Division III students?

H_{01}: The rape myth acceptance (total score) is not a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

H_{a1}: The rape myth acceptance (total score) is a significant predicator of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

Research Question 2: To what extent does rape myth subscale of "*she asked for it,*" as measured by IRMA-SF, relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

H_{02}: The rape myth subscale of *she asked for it* is not a significant predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

H_{02}: The rape myth subscale of *she asked for it* is a significant predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

Research Question 3: To what extent does rape myth subscale of "*he didn't mean to,*" as measured by IRMA-SF, relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

H_{03}: The rape myth subscale of *he didn't mean to* is not a significant predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

H_{a3}: The rape myth subscale of *he didn't mean to* is a significant predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

Research Question 4: To what extent does rape myth subscale of "*it wasn't really rape,*" as measured by IRMA-SF, relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

H_{04}: The rape myth subscale of *it wasn't really rape* is not a significant predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

H_{a4}: The rape myth subscale of *it wasn't really rape* is a significant predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

Research Question 5: To what extent does rape myth subscale of "*she lied,*" as measured by IRMA-SF, relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

H_{05}: The rape myth subscale of *she lied* is not a significant predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

H_{a5}: The rape myth subscale of *she lied* is a significant predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

Research Question 6: To what extent does rape myth subscale of "*she wanted it*," as measured by IRMA-SF, relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

H_{06}: The rape myth subscale of she wanted it is not a predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

H_{a6}: The rape myth subscale of she wanted it is a predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

RQ 7: To what extent does rape myth subscale of "*rape is a trivial event*," as measured by IRMA-SF, relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

$H_0$7: The rape myth subscale of "rape is a trivial event" is not a predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

H_a7: The rape myth subscale of "rape is a trivial event" is a predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

RQ 8: To what extent does rape myth subscale of "rape is a deviant event," as measured by IRMA-SF, relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

$H_0$8: The rape myth subscale of "rape is a deviant event" is not a predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

H_a8: The rape myth subscale of "rape is a deviant event" is a predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

RQ 9: To what extent does Division III student status (athlete, nonathlete) relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measure by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

$H_0$9: Division III student athlete status is not a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

H_a9: Division III student athlete status is a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

RQ 10: To what extent does gender relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measure by the BAS-R, among Division III students?

$H_0$10: Gender is not a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

H_a10: Gender is a significant predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention.

Four hierarchical multiple regression analyses will be conducted to determine the extent to which rape myth acceptance (e.g., she asked for it, he didn't mean to, it wasn't really rape, and she lied), athlete status, and gender predict attitudes toward bystander intervention in four specific situations (i.e., high-risk situations, post-assault situations, post-assault reporting of perpetrators, and proactive opportunities). In hierarchical multiple regression, independent variables are entered into the regression equation in steps in order of predictive power based on theoretical reasoning to determine the extent to which each independent variable or blocks of variables adds to the explained variance in a dependent variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The theoretical framework and relevant literature suggest that rape myth acceptance may be the strongest predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention, followed by athlete status, and gender (Banyard et al., 2009; Hoxmeier et al., 2018; Humphrey & Kahn, 2000; Jozkowski et al., 2019; McMahon, 2010; McMahon et al., 2014; Navarro & Tewksbury, 2017).

As noted previously, prior to the hierarchical multiple regression analysis I will evaluate the assumptions of normality, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity, outliers, linear relationships between variables, and quality of covariance matrices. Normality will be assessed using histograms and Q-Q plots and linear relationships will be examined using scatterplots. Additionally, a scatterplot of residuals will be used to test for homoscedasticity. Multicollinearity will be assessed using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values and the Durbin-Watson *d* test will examine the independence of residuals. After evaluating assumptions and adjusting for any missing data, the hierarchical multiple regression analyses will be conducted.

Threats to Validity

For this study, it cannot be assumed that the sample archival data that was collected is representative of the general population of college student athletes and non-athletes nor that the results would be representative of Division III student athletes regarding attitudes and beliefs related to rape, sexual assault, and bystander intervention. Additionally, the data collected and analyzed from the health and wellness survey may not be accurate and reliable due to participant fatigue, honesty in reporting, and nonparticipation. I cannot guarantee that the respondents answered all survey questions in complete truth; therefore, the results may not accurately reflect the true attitudes and perceptions of the population. For example, some students may have chosen not to participate due to self-awareness about negative beliefs related to rape and sexual assault. Finally, I did not actually observe any behavior or measure any instances of behavioral interventions; therefore, the lack of observation and need to solely rely on participant self-reports may have a negative impact on the validity of the data.

I also had an active role in raising awareness and implementing educational programs for college students and specifically collaborating with the athletic department (e.g., administrators, athletic trainers, and coaches) to engage student athletes, which may have resulted in researcher bias. However, since the survey was web-based and there was no direct recruitment for student athlete participation, the bias becomes minimal. There is also a bias regarding the noted difference between Division I and Division III, where Division III student athletes have a stronger purpose toward academic achievement (i.e., being a student first).

Wells et al. (2011) found a web-based survey leads to reporting of more extreme views and behaviors when compared to an in-class survey. In addition, research suggests that among college students, bias response rate is higher for Caucasians, females, and disproportionately low for African Americans (Sax et al., 2003). Therefore, the results may not be generalizable beyond the specific population from which the sample was drawn. Lastly, there is a higher likelihood that length and salience of the survey produced respondents' fatigue.

Ethical Considerations

Original data were collected anonymously, such that student names and student ID numbers were not associated with the survey and are not included in archival data set. While confidentiality of the survey results were maintained participants voluntarily provided their full name to enter a drawing or be given extra credit for a class. Other potential concerns related to the collaboration with the athletic department, in which I provided regular updates to the athletic administration related to the participation rate of student athletes. Given that some athletic teams were smaller than others (i.e., women's volleyball team versus football team), the known percentage of participation in smaller teams may have led individual athletes to feel coerced into participating.

Raw data were accessible only to the creator of survey within the CampusLabs software. Campus Labs requires a username and password to log in and access any survey created. I was the creator of the survey and lead researcher approved by the HRSC for the study, which aimed to examine the overall health and wellbeing of the college students enrolled during the Spring 2018 term. Data will be maintained in the

CampusLabs software for future comparative analysis related to the original study or until the department determines there is no longer a need to maintain it. Another ethical consideration is my administrative and counselor role at the time of conducting the original study. Given the anonymity of survey respondents, a participant could have been assigned to me in my counselor role without my knowledge either prior to, during, or after the study. However, to my knowledge no situation like that occurred.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which rape myth acceptance, athlete status, and gender predict attitudes toward bystander intervention. This study will utilize archival data from a health and wellness survey conducted at a NCAA Division III university, with a target population of undergraduate college students. The survey was web-based and developed in CampusLabs. Participants were recruited through a mass email to the student body. Athletes were encouraged by coaches and athletics staff to complete the survey and incentivized with a pizza party. All students were incentivized with eligibility to enter a drawing for one of six $25 gift cards. The instruments selected for this research were described and reliability and validity were established. Hierarchical multiple regression will be used to analyze and describe the data. Threats to validity and ethical considerations were also addressed. Chapter 4 will provide a detailed discussion of the data analysis process and research findings.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this quantitative, cross-sectional survey study was to investigate the relationship between acceptance of specific rape myths and attitudes toward bystander intervention in specific situations among Division III athletes and nonathletes on a college campus. Specifically, I aimed to address the gap by examining the extent to which acceptance of specific rape myths, athlete status, and gender predict attitudes toward bystander intervention in four specific situations (i.e., high-risk situations, post-assault support for victims, post-assault reporting of perpetrators, and proactive opportunities). This study used archival data from a comprehensive student survey on health and wellness, which incorporated the IRMA-SF and BAS (Honeycutt & Khodorkovskaya, 2018). Ten research questions in this study were tested using hierarchical multiple regression regarding the extent that rape myth acceptance (total score), as measured by the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale-Short Form (IRMA-SF), relates to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the Bystander Attitude Scale-Revised (BAS-R), among Division III students. This included the subscales she asked for it, he didn't mean to, it wasn't really rape, she lied, rape is a trivial event, rape is a deviant event, and she wanted it. The other two questions asked the extent that Division III student status and gender relate to attitudes toward bystander intervention, as measured by the BAS-R, among Division III students.

In this chapter, the method for data collection and screening procedures are discussed, followed by descriptive statistics and the evaluation of statistical assumptions.

The chapter concludes with the hierarchical multiple regression analyses and summary of the results.

Data Collection

The data were collected for a 3-week period during the Spring 2018 term. The health and wellness survey included a broad range of factors such as physical health, mental health, alcohol use, substance use, self-efficacy, rape myth acceptance, previous participation in programs, bystander intervention, and demographic questions such as age, race, gender, year in college, and athlete status. Relevant to the current study, the health and wellness survey used the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance-Short Form to measure rape myth acceptance and Bystander Attitude Scale-Revised to measure attitudes toward bystander intervention. A link was created for the survey in CampusLabs, and parameters were set to minimize the potential for an individual to complete the survey more than once.

The original study had 313 participants. However, after excluding participants with missing data specific to questions in the IRMA-SF and BAS-R, the total sample size for this study was $N = 278$. The survey was sent to all enrolled students attending classes on-campus, but there was no means to determine how many students opened or read the email so the response rate could not be accurately determined. Inclusion criteria for this study were college students and currently enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate program on-campus.

The survey took place in an online format and began with informed consent, explaining the purpose of the survey, the voluntary nature of participation in the survey,

risks and benefits, privacy, and contact information for questions related to the survey. Additionally, contact information was provided for the on-campus resources and supports given the sensitive nature of the survey (i.e., questions related to sexual assault and past experiences). The survey was anonymous, and no identifying information was collected to protect participant privacy. Respondents who did not provide consent were directed to the end of the survey.

Given the length of the survey and sensitive nature of some of the questions, there was no forced response implemented. Therefore, participants were permitted not to answer or opt to skip some questions. Upon completion of the survey, participants were directed to a separate page link to provide their name to enter a drawing for one of four $25 gift cards.

Demographics

A summary of the demographic data (i.e., gender, year in college, and athlete status) for participants is displayed in Table 1. Most of the participants were female (*n* = 163, 58.6%), in their first year of college (*n* = 86, 30.9%), and reported to be non-athletes (*n* = 164, 59.0%).

Table 1

Frequencies: Gender, Year in College, and Athlete Status

Variable		*N*	*%*
Gender	Unknown	8	2.9%
	Male	104	37.4%
	Female	163	58.6%
	Female to Male	3	1.1%
Year in College	1st year	86	30.9%

	2nd year	44	15.8%
	3rd year	64	23.0%
	4th year	46	16.5%
	5th year or beyond	6	2.2%
	Graduate	32	11.5%
Athlete Status	Athlete	114	41.0%
	Non-Athlete	164	59.0%

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The total sample included 278 college students. The following means and standard deviations were calculated for the eight predictor variables: she asked for it (M = 4.85, SD = 3.04), it wasn't really rape (M = 2.42, SD = 1.44), he didn't meant to (M = 4.19, SD = 2.79), she wanted it (M = 2.84, SD = 1.85), she lied (M = 4.43, SD = 2.94), rape is a trivial event (M = 2.88, SD = 1.98), rape is a deviant event (M = 4.43, SD = 2.86) and IRMA total (M = 26.07, SD = 13.02). Means and standard deviations were also calculated for the following outcome variables related to attitudes toward bystander intervention: high-risk situations (M = 25.16, SD=5.67), proactive opportunities (M = 10.85, SD = 4.99), post-assault reporting of perpetrator (M = 7.54, SD = 2.08), and post-assault situations (M = 9.07, SD = 1.89). Table 2 displays the means and standard deviations for the predictor and outcome variables.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for Predictor and Outcome Variables**

Variable	*M*	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*
IRMA she asked	3.00	21.00	4.85	3.04

IRMA it wasn't	2.00	14.00	2.42	1.44
IRMA she wanted	2.00	14.00	2.84	1.85
IRMA he didn't mean to	2.00	14.00	4.19	2.79
IRMA she lied	2.00	14.00	4.43	2.94
IRMA trivial event	2.00	14.00	2.88	1.98
IRMA deviant event	3.00	21.00	4.43	2.86
IRMA total	16.00	106.00	26.07	13.02
BAS post assault situations	2.00	10.00	9.07	1.89
BAS post assault reporting	2.00	10.00	7.54	2.08
BAS high-risk	6.00	30.00	25.16	5.67
BAS proactive	4.00	20.00	10.85	4.99

*Note: N = 278

Evaluations of Statistical Assumptions

Assumptions for multiple regression were tested prior to the regression analysis (i.e., normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity, and independence of residuals). Normality was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Q-Q plots. Table 3 provides the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and indicates that the variables were not normally distributed. Q-Q plots for all variables are provided in Appendix B-E and also demonstrate a lack of normal distribution. Therefore, the assumption of normality was not met.

Table 3

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Testing

Variable	*Statistic*	*df*	*p*	*Skewness*	*Kurtosis*
BAS post assault situation	.421	278	.000	-2.373	5.229
BAS post assault reporting	.155	278	.000	-.837	.307
BAS high-risk	.197	278	.000	-1.644	2.453
BAS proactive	.123	278	.000	.314	-1.052

IRMA she asked	.294	278	.000	2.053	4.387
IRMA she wanted	.421	278	.000	2.674	8.053
IRMA it wasn't	.500	278	.000	4.235	20.918
IRMA he didn't mean to	.255	278	.000	1.152	.409
IRMA she lied	.240	278	.000	1.246	.896
IRMA trivial event	.432	278	.000	2.740	8.476
IRMA deviant event	.408	278	.000	2.231	5.153
IRMA total	.219	278	.000	2.235	6.464

Linearity between predictor and outcome variables was examined using scatterplots. Scatterplots demonstrating linear relationships between each predictor and outcome variable are provided in Appendix B-E. The linearity assumption was not met for the data. Multicollinearity was assessed by examining the variance inflation factor values (VIF). Table 4 displays the VIF values for the predictor variables. With the exception of predictor variables “she asked for it” and “trivial event,” the data indicated the predictor variables were not significantly correlated. The VIF values for variables “she asked for it” and “trivial event” are above 5, indicating a higher likelihood of correlation with another variable. In addition, the variable of “deviant event” was excluded from the regression model because of the extreme VIF value. VIF values are below 10 and tolerance scores are above 0.1. For all of the predictor variables other than the total score, there was no multicollinearity.

Table 4

Collinearity Diagnostics for Predictor Variables

Variable	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		
She Asked For It	.158	6.327
It Wasn’t Really Rape	.267	3.744

He Didn't Mean To	.239	4.177
She Wanted It	.290	3.445
She Lied	.190	5.266
Rape is a Trivial Event	.136	7.372
IRMA Total	.016	60.16
Athlete Status	.933	1.072

The Durbin-Watson *d* test was conducted to examine independence of residuals. Table 5 provides the Durban-Watson test results for each of the four regressions, using the nine predictor variables (i.e., she asked for it, it wasn't really, he didn't mean to, she wanted it, she lied, rape is a trivial event, rape is a deviant event, and IRMA total, as well as athlete status and gender) in each regression. The Durbin-Watson scores are close to 2.0, indicating the assumption of independence of residuals was met.

Table 5

Model Summary: Durbin-Watson d Test

Outcome Variable	*Durbin-Watson*
Post Assault Situations	1.821
Post Assault Reporting	1.964
High Risk Situation	1.868
Proactive Situations	1.959

Homoscedasticity was analyzed using the standardized residual and standardized predicted values for the seven regressions (Appendix B-E). The scatterplots for each outcome indicate the variance of residuals is constant for all regressions. Therefore, the assumption of homoscedasticity was met. P-P plots for all seven regressions were used to examine the distribution of residuals (Appendix B-E). The residuals were normally

distributed for all regressions except for the "post-assault situations" and "high-risk outcome" variables. Therefore, the assumption of normally distributed residuals was met.

Cronbach's alpha was computed to test the internal consistency of the instruments used with the current sample. Table 6 provides the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each instrument and subscale, which ranged from .59 to .96.

Table 6

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for Study Instruments

Instrument	α
She Asked For It	.678
It Wasn't Really Rape	.800
He Didn't Mean To	.593
She Wanted It	.691
She Lied	.819
Rape is a Trivial Event	.816
Rape is a Deviant Event	.822
IRMA Total	.908
High Risk Situations	.892
Proactive Opportunities	.904
Post-Assault Reporting	.718
Post-Assault Situations	.963

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis

Four hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted to determine the strength of the predictor variables on the outcome variables of components of attitudes toward bystander intervention: high-risk situations, post-assault response, post-assault situations, and proactive opportunities. Eight of the predictor variables consisted of the rape myth total score and 7 subscale scores (i.e., she asked for it, it wasn't really rape, he didn't

mean to, she wanted it, she lied, rape is a trivial event, rape is a deviant event) which were entered in Block 1 of the hierarchical regression. Athlete status (Block 2) and gender (Block 3) were the final two predictor variables used in the regression analyses. In hierarchical multiple regression, predictor variables are entered into the regression equation in order of predictive power based on theoretical reasoning. The variables were entered in this order as the theoretical framework and relevant literature suggest that rape myth acceptance is the strongest predictor of attitudes toward bystander intervention, followed by athlete status and gender.

Post-Assault Situations

The first regression examined the relationship between the predictor variables and post-assault reporting (i.e., attitudes about accompanying victims (male or female) to report to the police). The results revealed at model 1, rape myth acceptance significantly contributed to the regression model, F (7,270) = 9.40, p <.001, and accounted for 19.6% of the variance in post-assault situations. When athlete status was added (model 2), athlete status also significantly contributed to the model, F (8,269) = 10.27, p < .001, and explained an additional 23.4% of the variance in post-assault situations. When gender was added (model 3), gender significantly contributed to the model as well, F (9,268) = 9.40, p < .001. Effect sizes for the models (R^2) range from .196 to .240, indicating small to medium effect. Tables 7 and 8 present the regression model summary.

Table 7

Model Summary: Predictors of Post-Assault Situations

Model	*R*	*R* Square	Adjusted *R* Square	SE of the Estimate

1	.443	.196	.175	1.72332
2	.484	.234	.211	1.68525
3	.490	.240	.215	1.68172

Table 8

ANOVA for 3 Model Regression: Post-Assault Situations

Model		*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P*
1	Regression	195.555	7	27.936	9.407	.000
	Residual	801.859	270	2.970		
	Total	997.414	277			
2	Regression	233.434	8	29.179	10.274	.000
	Residual	763.980	269	2.840		
	Total	997.414	277			
3	Regression	239.463	9	26.607	9.408	.000
	Residual	757.950	268	2.828		
	Total	997.414	277			

In Model 1, the hierarchical multiple regression revealed that only one rape myth "it wasn't really rape" significantly predicted bystander attitudes about accompanying victims (male or female) to report to the police, β = -.242 (t = -2.295, p = .002). This demonstrated that higher acceptance of this rape myth (it wasn't really rape) predicted more negative attitudes towards intervening in post-assault situations. Model 2 revealed that athlete status significantly predicted bystander attitudes towards bystander intervention specific to *post-assault situations* as well, β = .202 (t = 3.652, p = .000). This showed that athletes were less likely than nonathletes to have positive attitudes towards intervention for post-assault situations. The final model revealed that gender was not a significant predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention, specific to post-assault situations β = .082 (t = 1.460, p = .145). The results showed that acceptance of the rape

myth “it wasn’t really rape” and status as an athlete were associated with having more negative attitudes towards bystander intervention specific to post-assault situations (i.e., attitudes about accompanying victims, male or female, to report to the police). The regression coefficients for all of the predictor variables for post assault situations are shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Coefficients for Outcome Variable: Post Assault Situations

Model		*b*	SE	β	*t*	*p*
1	(Constant)	10.500	.245		42.874	.000
	she asked for it	-.039	.084	-.063	-.468	.640
	she wanted it	-.029	.103	-.028	-.280	.780
	it wasn't really rape	-.318	.138	-.242	-2.295	.022
	he didn't mean to	.047	.076	.069	.619	.537
	she lied	.049	.080	.076	.607	.544
	trivial event	-.104	.142	-.109	-.738	.461
	IRMA total	-.019	.061	-.129	-.308	.758
2	(Constant)	9.124	.446		20.437	.000
	she asked for it	-.091	.084	-.147	-1.094	.275
	she wanted it	-.060	.101	-.059	-.592	.554
	it wasn't really rape	-.326	.135	-.249	-2.411	.017
	he didn't mean to	.036	.074	.053	.487	.626
	she lied	.024	.079	.037	.302	.763
	trivial event	-.141	.139	-.148	-1.019	.309
	IRMA total	.010	.060	.072	.173	.863
	Athlete Status	.777	.213	.202	3.652	.000
3	(Constant)	8.613	.566		15.208	.000
	she asked for it	-.099	.084	-.159	-1.188	.236
	she wanted it	-.054	.101	-.053	-.535	.593
	it wasn't really rape	-.323	.135	-.246	-2.387	.018
	he didn't mean to	.034	.074	.051	.465	.642
	she lied	.029	.079	.044	.363	.717
	trivial event	-.148	.139	-.154	-1.067	.287
	IRMA total	.015	.060	.101	.244	.807

Athlete Status	.782	.212	.203	3.680	.000
Gender	.257	.176	.082	1.460	.145

Post-Assault Reporting

The second regression examined the relationship between the predictor variables and post-assault situations (i.e., attitudes about reporting a suspected assault to police or other authorities). The results revealed that at model 1, rape myth acceptance significantly contributed to the regression model, F (7,270) = 4.355, $p < .001$, and accounted for 7.8% of the variance in post-assault reporting. When athlete status was added (model 2), athlete status also significantly contributed to the model, F (8,269) = 5.071, $p < .001$, and explained an additional 10.5% of the variance in post-assault reporting. When gender was added (model 3), gender significantly contributed to the model as well, F (9,268) = 4.672, $p < .001$. Effect sizes for the models (R^2) range from .101 to .136, indicating small to medium effect. Tables 10 and 11 present the regression model summary.

Table 10

Model Summary: Predictors of Post-Assault Reporting

Model	*R*	*R* Square	Adjusted *R* Square	SE of the Estimate
1	.319	.101	.078	1.99920
2	.362	.131	.105	1.96964
3	.368	.136	.107	1.96814

Table 11

ANOVA for 3 Model Regression: Post-Assault Reporting

Model	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P*

1	Regression	121.842	7	17.406	4.355	.000
	Residual	1079.140	270	3.997		
	Total	1200.982	277			
2	Regression	157.399	8	19.675	5.071	.000
	Residual	1043.583	269	3.879		
	Total	1200.982	277			
3	Regression	162.867	9	18.096	4.672	.000
	Residual	1038.115	268	3.874		
	Total	1200.982	277			

In Model 1, the hierarchical multiple regression revealed that the rape myth "*rape is a trivial event"* and the rape myth total score predicted bystander attitudes about reporting a suspected assault to the police or other authorities, β = .369 (*t* = 2.363, *p* = .019) and β = -1.079 (*t* = -2.427, *p* = .016). The results revealed that higher acceptance of the rape myth (trivial event) predicted more positive attitudes towards post assault reporting. However, the rape myths total score demonstrated that higher acceptance of the rape myths total score predicted more negative attitudes towards post assault reporting. Model 2 revealed that athlete status significantly predicted bystander attitudes towards bystander intervention specific to post-assault reporting as well, β = .178 (*t* = 3.037, *p* = .003). This showed that athletes were less likely than nonathletes to have positive attitudes towards intervention for post-assault reporting. The final model revealed that gender was not a significant predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention, specific to post-assault reporting β = .071 (*t* = 1.188, *p* = .236). The results showed that acceptance of the rape myth total scores, as well as the status as an athlete were associated with having more negative attitudes towards bystander intervention specific to post-assault reporting (i.e., attitudes about reporting a suspected assault to police or other

authorities). The regression coefficients for all of the predictor variables for post assault reporting are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

Coefficients for Outcome Variable: Post Assault Reporting

Model		*b*	SE	β	*t*	*p*
1	(Constant)	8.736	.284		30.747	.000
	she asked for it	.107	.098	.157	1.099	.273
	she wanted it	-.033	.120	-.030	-.278	.781
	it wasn't really rape	.126	.161	.088	.785	.433
	he didn't mean to	.165	.088	.221	1.878	.061
	she lied	.172	.093	.244	1.852	.065
	trivial event	.388	.164	.369	2.363	.019
	IRMA total	-.173	.071	-1.079	-2.427	.016
2	(Constant)	7.402	.522		14.187	.000
	she asked for it	.057	.098	.083	.583	.560
	she wanted it	-.063	.118	-.056	-.535	.593
	it wasn't really rape	.118	.158	.082	.743	.458
	he didn't mean to	.154	.087	.207	1.785	.075
	she lied	.148	.092	.210	1.611	.108
	trivial event	.352	.162	.335	2.171	.031
	IRMA total	-.144	.071	-.901	-2.040	.042
	Athlete Status	.753	.249	.178	3.027	.003
3	(Constant)	6.916	.663		10.434	.000
	she asked for it	.049	.098	.072	.506	.613
	she wanted it	-.058	.118	-.051	-.488	.626
	it wasn't really rape	.121	.158	.084	.767	.444
	he didn't mean to	.153	.086	.205	1.767	.078
	she lied	.153	.092	.216	1.659	.098
	trivial event	.346	.162	.329	2.134	.034
	IRMA total	-.140	.071	-.876	-1.981	.049
	Athlete Status	.757	.249	.179	3.047	.003
	Gender	.245	.206	.071	1.188	.236

High-Risk Situations

The third regression examined the relationship between the predictor variables and high-risk situations (i.e., attitudes about situations where immediate risk for sexual violence is posed to the victim). The results revealed at model 1, rape myth acceptance significantly contributed to the regression model, F (7,270) = 9.634, $p < .001$, and accounted for 20.0% of the variance in high-risk situations. When athlete status was added (model 2), athlete status also significantly contributed to the model, F (8,269) = 9.381, $p < .001$, and explained an additional 19.5% of the variance in high-risk situations. When gender was added (model 3), gender significantly contributed to the model as well, F (9,268) = 8.651, $p < .001$. Effect sizes for the models (R^2) range from .200 to .225, indicating small to medium effect. Tables 13 and 14 present the regression model summary.

Table 13

Model Summary: Predictors of High-Risk Situations

Model	*R*	*R* Square	Adjusted *R* Square	SE of the Estimate
1	.447	.200	.179	5.13733
2	.467	.218	.195	5.08773
3	.474	.225	.199	5.07442

Table 14

ANOVA for 3 Model Regression: High-Risk Situations

Model		*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P*
1	Regression	1779.828	7	254.261	9.634	.000

	Residual	7125.888	270	26.392		
	Total	8905.716	277			
2	Regression	1942.665	8	242.833	9.381	.000
	Residual	6963.050	269	25.885		
	Total	8905.716	277			
3	Regression	2004.790	9	222.754	8.651	.000
	Residual	6900.926	268	25.750		
	Total	8905.716	277			

In Model 1, the hierarchical multiple regression revealed that the rape myth total score significantly predicted bystander attitudes about situations where immediate risk for sexual violence is posed to the victim reporting a suspected assault to the police or other authorities, β = -.942 (t = -2.245, p = .026). This demonstrated that higher acceptance of the rape myths total score predicted more negative attitudes towards high-risk situations. Model 2 revealed that athlete status significantly predicted bystander attitudes towards bystander intervention specific to high-risk situations as well, β = .140 (t = 2.508, p = .013). This showed that athletes were less likely than nonathletes to have positive attitudes towards intervention for high-risk situations. The final model revealed that gender was not a significant predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention, specific to post-assault reporting β = .088 (t = 1.553, p = .122). The results showed that higher levels of rape myth acceptance total (total score) and status as an athlete were associated with having more negative attitudes towards bystander intervention specific to high-risk situations (i.e., attitudes about situations where immediate risk for sexual violence is posed to the victim). The regression coefficients for all of the predictor variables for high-risk situations are shown in Table 15.

Table 15

Coefficients for Outcome Variable: High-Risk Situations

Model		*b*	SE	β	*t*	*p*
1	(Constant)	29.612	.730		40.559	.000
	she asked for it	.466	.251	.250	1.856	.064
	she wanted it	.086	.307	.028	.281	.779
	it wasn't really rape	-.361	.413	-.092	-.874	.383
	he didn't mean to	.411	.225	.203	1.822	.069
	she lied	.470	.239	.244	1.966	.050
	trivial event	.278	.422	.097	.660	.510
	IRMA total	-.410	.183	-.942	-2.245	.026
2	(Constant)	26.759	1.348		19.853	.000
	she asked for it	.358	.252	.192	1.420	.157
	she wanted it	.022	.305	.007	.072	.943
	it wasn't really rape	-.379	.409	-.097	-.927	.355
	he didn't mean to	.389	.223	.192	1.739	.083
	she lied	.418	.238	.218	1.760	.080
	trivial event	.202	.419	.070	.482	.630
	IRMA total	-.349	.183	-.802	-1.914	.057
	Athlete Status	1.611	.642	.140	2.508	.013
3	(Constant)	25.120	1.709		14.698	.000
	she asked for it	.333	.252	.179	1.321	.188
	she wanted it	.041	.305	.013	.134	.894
	it wasn't really rape	-.366	.408	-.093	-.898	.370
	he didn't mean to	.383	.223	.189	1.719	.087
	she lied	.434	.237	.225	1.827	.069
	trivial event	.181	.418	.063	.433	.666
	IRMA total	-.336	.182	-.771	-1.841	.067
	Athlete Status	1.625	.641	.141	2.537	.012
	Gender	.825	.531	.088	1.553	.122

Proactive Opportunities

The fourth regression examined the relationship between the predictor variables and proactive opportunities (i.e., attitudes about situations where no risk is posed to

anyone, but where the attitude includes trying to become more active in learning about sexual violence and taking a stand against it). The results revealed at model one, rape myth acceptance significantly contributed to the regression model, F (7,270) = 5.984, p < .001, and accounted for 12.8% of the variance in proactive opportunities. Athlete status also significantly contributed to the model, F (8,269) = 9.381, p < .001, and explained an additional 15.1% of the variance in proactive opportunities. Finally, gender significantly contributed to the model as well, F (3,268) = 6.970, p < .001, and explained 19.0% of the variance in proactive opportunities. Effect sizes for the models (R^2) range from .128 to .190, indicating small to medium effect. Tables 16 and 17 present the regression model summary.

Table 16

Model Summary: Predictors of Proactive Opportunities

Model	*R*	*R* Square	Adjusted *R* Square	SE of the Estimate
1	.358	.128	.106	4.72
2	.389	.151	.126	4.67
3	.436	.190	.162	4.57

Table 17

ANOVA for 3 Model Regression: Proactive Opportunities

Model		*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P*
1	Regression	888.904	7	126.986	5.683	.000
	Residual	6033.341	270	22.346		
	Total	6922.245	277			
2	Regression	1045.793	8	130.724	5.984	.000
	Residual	5876.452	269	21.846		
	Total	6922.245	277			
3	Regression	1312.926	9	145.881	6.970	.000

Residual	5609.318	268	20.930
Total	6922.245	277	

In Model 1, the hierarchical multiple regression revealed that the rape myth "*she lied"* significantly predicted bystander attitudes about situations where no risk is posed to anyone, but where the attitude includes trying to become more active in learning about sexual violence and taking a stand against it, β = -.321 (t = -2.473, p = .014). This demonstrated that higher acceptance of the rape myth "*she lied"* predicted more negative attitudes towards proactive opportunities. Model 2 revealed that athlete status significantly predicted bystander attitudes towards bystander intervention specific to proactive opportunities as well, β = .156 (t = 2.680, p = .008). This showed that athletes were less likely than nonathletes to have positive attitudes towards proactive opportunities. The final model also revealed that gender significantly predicted bystander attitudes towards bystander intervention specific to proactive opportunities, β = .207 (t = 3.573, p = .000). The results showed that acceptance of the rape myth "*she lied"* and status as an athlete were associated with having more negative attitudes towards bystander intervention specific to proactive opportunities. The results also showed that females had more positive attitudes toward bystander intervention specific to proactive opportunities (i.e., attitudes about situations where no risk is posed to anyone, but where the attitude includes trying to become more active in learning about sexual violence and taking a stand against it). The regression coefficients for all of the predictor variables for proactive opportunities are shown in Table 18.

Table 18

Coefficients for Outcome Variable: Proactive Opportunities

Model		*b*	SE	β	*t*	*p*
1	(Constant)	14.323	.672		21.321	.000
	she asked for it	-.398	.231	-.243	-1.726	.086
	she wanted it	-.158	.283	-.059	-.560	.576
	it wasn't really rape	-.659	.380	-.191	-1.736	.084
	he didn't mean to	-.340	.207	-.190	-1.638	.103
	she lied	-.544	.220	-.321	-2.473	.014
	trivial event	.036	.388	.014	.093	.926
	IRMA total	.163	.168	.425	.970	.333
2	(Constant)	11.523	1.238		9.306	.000
	she asked for it	-.504	.232	-.307	-2.176	.030
	she wanted it	-.221	.280	-.082	-.789	.431
	it wasn't really rape	-.677	.375	-.196	-1.803	.073
	he didn't mean to	-.362	.205	-.202	-1.761	.079
	she lied	-.595	.218	-.351	-2.724	.007
	trivial event	-.039	.385	-.015	-.102	.919
	IRMA total	.223	.168	.580	1.328	.185
	Athlete Status	1.581	.590	.156	2.680	.008
3	(Constant)	8.124	1.541		5.273	.000
	she asked for it	-.557	.227	-.339	-2.449	.015
	she wanted it	-.182	.275	-.068	-.664	.507
	it wasn't really rape	-.651	.368	-.188	-1.771	.078
	he didn't mean to	-.373	.201	-.209	-1.856	.064
	she lied	-.563	.214	-.332	-2.633	.009
	trivial event	-.082	.377	-.033	-.219	.827
	IRMA total	.251	.164	.655	1.529	.127
	Athlete Status	1.611	.578	.159	2.789	.006
	Gender	1.710	.479	.207	3.573	.000

Summary

Four hierarchical multiple regressions were used to determine if rape myth acceptance, athlete status, and gender were predictive of components of attitudes towards

bystander intervention: high-risk situations, post-assault response, post-assault situations, and proactive opportunities. The results revealed that in each component of attitudes towards bystander intervention, rape myth acceptance and athlete status were significant predictors. However, gender was a significant predictor only for proactive opportunities. For post-assault situations, higher acceptance of the rape myth "*it wasn't really rape*" and status as an athlete were associated with having more negative attitudes towards bystander intervention specific to post-assault situations (i.e., attitudes about accompanying victims (male or female) to report to the police). For post-assault reporting, higher acceptance of the rape myth "r*ape is a trivial event*" and rape myth total score, as well as the status as an athlete, were associated with having more negative attitudes towards bystander intervention specific to post-assault reporting (i.e., attitudes about reporting a suspected assault to police or other authorities). For high-risk situations, higher rape myth acceptance (total score) and status as an athlete were associated with having more negative attitudes towards bystander intervention specific to high-risk situations (i.e., attitudes about situations where immediate risk for sexual violence is posed to the victim). Finally, for proactive situations, higher acceptance of the rape myth "*she lied"* and status as an athlete were associated with having more negative attitudes towards bystander intervention specific to proactive opportunities. Additionally, females had more positive attitudes toward bystander intervention specific to proactive opportunities (i.e., attitudes about situations where no risk is posed to anyone, but where the attitude includes trying to become more active in learning about sexual violence and

taking a stand against it). Chapter 5 includes interpretations of the findings, limitations of the study, implications for social change, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which rape myth acceptance, athlete status, and gender predict attitudes toward bystander intervention as it related to specific situations (i.e., high-risk situations, post-assault support for victims, post-assault reporting of perpetrators, and proactive opportunities). Previous research has examined rape culture within the college setting and the differences between college student athletes and non-athletes. However, those studies were conducted primarily at Division I institutions (Humphrey & Kahn, 2000; Navarro & Tewksbury, 2017; Sønderlund et al., 2013; Young et al., 2016). Additionally, previous studies indicated that bystander intervention attitudes and beliefs related to sexual assault on college campuses created barriers to intervention, suggesting that there was a need to reduce rape myth acceptance for bystander intervention effectiveness (Beshers & DiVita, 2021; Hofmeyr et al., 2017; Holtz et al., 2018; Katz & Moore, 2013; McMahon, 2010). Previous researchers have also suggested a need to examine rape myth acceptance and bystander intervention in a more comprehensive manner by examining those issues across all types of institutions and subgroups (Beshers, & DiVita, 2021; Holtz et al., 2018; McMahon et al., 2014a; McMahon et al., 2014b).

A quantitative nonexperimental cross-sectional survey research design was used to examine the extent to which rape myth acceptance (i.e., it wasn't really rape, she lied, she asked for it, he didn't really mean to, she wanted it, rape is a trivial event, rape is a deviant event, and total rape myth acceptance score), athlete status (i.e., athlete versus nonathlete), and gender predict attitudes towards bystander intervention (i.e., proactive

opportunities, high-risk situations, post-assault reporting, and post-assault situations). Results from the hierarchical multiple regressions showed that rape myth acceptance and athlete status were significant predictors of attitudes toward bystander intervention. Specifically, higher endorsement of rape myths predicted negative attitudes toward bystander intervention, and athletes had more negative attitudes toward bystander intervention than nonathletes. In addition, females were more likely to seek out proactive opportunities (e.g., attend trainings and educational seminars) compared to males.

Interpretation of Findings

Rape Myth Acceptance

Research Questions 1–8 examined the extent to which rape myth acceptance predict attitudes toward bystander intervention related to four situations/outcomes (i.e., post-assault reporting, post-assault situations, high-risk situations, and proactive opportunities). Higher levels of overall rape myth acceptance (total score) predicted more negative attitudes toward bystander intervention, specifically related to post-assault reporting (i.e., attitudes about reporting a suspected assault to police or other authorities) and high-risk situations (i.e., attitudes about situations where immediate risk of sexual violence is posed to the victim). These results confirm previous research, indicating that rape myth acceptance contributes to a negative attitude towards bystander intervention (Leone et al., 2021; McMahon, 2010; McMahon et al., 2014; Yule et al., 2022). The current study found that individuals who endorsed rape myths were less likely to report a sexual assault or engage in interventions in situations where there was an immediate risk of sexual violence posed to a victim. Similarly, previous researchers found that rape myth

acceptance was associated with lower rates of bystander intervention related to pre-and post-assault interventions (Yule et al, 2022). Additionally, college students reported that their failure to intervene in a pre-assault (i.e., seeing someone lead an intoxicated person to a room) and mid-assault (i.e., witnessing a physical or sexual assault) was due to barriers, such as a skill deficit or not feeling responsible for doing something.

The rape myth "rape is a trivial event" was also found to be a significant predictor specific to post-assault reporting. This result demonstrated that college students who scored higher on this rape myth (rape is a trivial event) had more positive attitudes toward post-assault reporting. That is, they were more likely to accompany a victim to report the assault to the police. There is a general perception that there were fewer barriers present for post-assault situations, which may help explain the current finding (Yule et al., 2022). Additionally, although this result seems counterintuitive, attitudes are linked with normative beliefs, which are subjective (McMahon et al., 2014). Because subjective norms are determined by what an individual perceives to be important to others in relation to specific behaviors or to what behaviors an individual perceives will earn them approval from their friend group (Champion & Skinner, 2008; Hoxmeier et al., 2018; Sundstrom et al., 2018), the belief that accompanying a post-assault victim to report the assault would win them favor with their friend group can explain this counterintuitive result. Lastly, empathy needs to be considered as a possible explanation for this result. Empathy is a unique predicting factor at each assault stage/situation (i.e., pre-assault, mid-assault, and post-assault; Yule et al., 2022). Results indicated that individuals with higher empathy scores (assessed using the Toronto Empathy

Questionnaire) were more likely to engage in bystander behavior and respond in pre-, mid-, and post-assault situations. Individuals higher in empathy have greater intent or motivation to help a stranger or friend (Leone et al., 2021).

The rape myth "it wasn't really rape" was a significant predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention specific to post-assault situations (i.e., attitudes about accompanying victims, male or female, to report to the police). This demonstrated that higher acceptance of this rape myth (it wasn't really rape) predicted more negative attitudes towards intervening in post-assault situations. The rape myth "she lied" was a significant predictor specific to proactive opportunities (i.e., attitudes about situations where no risk is posed to anyone but where the attitude includes trying to become more active in learning about sexual violence and taking a stand against it). This demonstrated that higher acceptance of the rape myth "she lied" predicted more negative attitudes towards proactive opportunities. These two findings are consistent with previous research and align with the theoretical framework, which will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

The rape myths of "she asked for it," "he didn't mean to," "rape is a deviant event," and "she wanted it" were not significant predictors of attitudes towards bystander intervention. In fact, the rape myth "rape is a deviant event," was excluded from all models due to an extreme VIF value. It is also important to note that although rape myths "she asked for it" and "rape is a trivial event" were not excluded from the models, the analysis indicated that there was high similarity to another variable (i.e., there is a higher possibility that multicollinearity exists; Frost, 2020). It is likely that the multicollinearity

was due to using the older version of the IRMA (Frost, 2020). The Updated Illinois Rape Myth Scale (the scale developed after the IRMA-SF that was used for the purpose of this study) kept the subscale *she asked for it*, but removed the subscale *she wanted it*. Therefore, one could surmise that the variables *she wanted it* and *she asked for it* were highly similar. Because of this, the updated version of the IRMA also removed subscales *rape is a trivial event* and *rape is a deviant event* (McMahon & Farmer, 2011; Payne et al., 1999).

Athlete Status

Research Question 9 examined the extent to which athlete status predicts attitudes towards bystander intervention related to four situations/outcomes (i.e., post-assault reporting, post-assault situations, high-risk situations, and proactive opportunities). Results from all four analyses revealed that athlete status significantly predicted attitudes towards bystander intervention, indicating that athletes had more negative attitudes towards bystander intervention than nonathletes. Additionally, results indicated that student athletes had higher levels of rape myth acceptance than nonathletes.

These findings are consistent with previous research, suggesting that there may be no significant difference in rape myth acceptance and bystander intervention attitudes among college student athletes within the various divisions (e.g., Division 1-3). Previous research asserts that student athletes are not a monolithic group; however, any differences that may be present are less likely a result of the division in which a student athlete plays and more likely a result of other factors, such as social or gender norms, ideas about masculinity, team versus individual sports, and contact sport versus non-contact (Bogen

et al., 2022; McMahon, 2005; McMahon, 2007; Navarro & Tewksbury, 2017; Yule et al., 2022). For example, Bogen et al. (2022) found that student athletes hold significantly gender-equitable attitudes and higher perceived peer support for violence compared to nonathletes. Gender equitable attitudes were assessed by asking participants about their level of agreement to specific items related to traditional gender norms, such as "guys should sleep with as many girls as possible." The higher the score meant more agreement with traditional gender norms and, thus, a less gender equitable attitude. Similar to Moynihan et al. (2010), the current results suggested that violence condoning behaviors may be reinforced in certain peer groups, such as all male athletic teams, rather than athletic involvement alone (Bogen et al., 2022).

Although the present study did not examine rape myth acceptance or attitudes towards bystander intervention among each of the sports (i.e., football, men's and women's basketball, softball, women's volleyball, men's and women's swimming and diving, men's and women's lacrosse, and men's and women's track/cross country), a majority of survey respondents who identified as athletes also identified as playing a team sport. This would further support the notion that athletes, and particularly those who participate in a team sport, have higher rape myth acceptance and greater traditional gender role or less gender-equitable attitudes than nonathletes (Bogen et al., 2022; Young et al., 2016).

Gender

Research question 10 examined the extent to which gender predicts attitudes towards bystander intervention related to four situations/outcomes (e.g., post-assault

reporting, post-assault situations, high-risk situations, and proactive opportunities). Results revealed that gender was a significant predictor of attitudes towards bystander intervention specific only to proactive opportunities (i.e., attitudes toward situations where no risk is posed to anyone but where the attitude includes trying to become more active in learning about sexual violence and taking a stand against it). This showed that males were less likely than females to have positive attitudes towards bystander intervention. More specifically, females were more likely than males to want to educate themselves about sexual violence and taking a stand against it.

This result supports previous research related to gender and attitudes towards bystander intervention. Yule et al. (2022) found that females were more likely to intervene in post-assault situations and express empathic concern towards others compared to males. Additionally, females endorsed fewer hostile sexist or benevolent sexist attitudes and had less rape myths acceptance compared to males. However, it was also found that benevolent sexism (i.e., attitudes about women that seem positive because they overlay a core attitude that denote women are fragile, need protection, lack competence, or are otherwise inferior to men) was associated with lower intervention in post-situations. Other factors associated with barriers to intervene were sexist attitudes. Similarly, Bogen et al. (2022) found that male athletes who hold less gender-equitable attitudes have greater rape myth acceptance and higher perceived support for violence. They suggested that, and condoning violence, may be a result of positive reinforcement in all male athletic teams, rather that athletic involvement itself. The authors found it

noteworthy to report that females involved in athletics had slightly higher peer support for violence and lower gender equity attitudes as well.

The results of this current study also found that males score higher in rape myth acceptance compared to females, which supports previous research (Besher, & DiVita, 2021; Leone et al., 2021; McMahon, 2010). Beshers and DeVita (2021) found that on average, males scored higher on the *she lied* subscale than females. However, according to Yule et al. (2022) greater rape myth acceptance predicted a failure to perceive responsibility to intervene for females, but not males, and a greater endorsement of benevolent sexism predicted skill deficit barrier to intervention for females, but not males. Mulla et al. (2023) suggested that perceived rape myth acceptance is related to perceived social barriers to intervention and thus, individuals regardless of gender are less likely to intervene. However, when controlling for perceived social barriers, an individual's perception of their peers' acceptance of rape myths may influence their bystander intervention behavior. For example, if the individual perceives that their peers strongly endorse rape myths, that perception may increase the likelihood of bystander intervention behavior. It is important to note that this result is contrary to TPB, and TPB would assert that there should be a decrease in the likelihood of bystander intervention due to the perceived social acceptance. Previous findings indicated the increased likelihood of bystander intervention to be particularly true for those who reported experiencing their own sexual victimization in the past (Mulla et al., 2023).

Theoretical Framework

Consistent with the theory of planned behavior (TPB), the current results support the hypothesis that an individual's attitude and beliefs about a behavior are predictive of a willingness to engage in that behavior (Ajzen, 1985, Champion & Skinner, 2008; Montano & Kasprzyk, 2008). Specifically, the beliefs about rape and one's acceptance of rape myths contributed to their attitude towards bystander intervention. The current study found that higher rape myth acceptance predicted more negative attitudes towards bystander intervention (i.e., an individual's belief that they would not intervene in various situations related to rape/sexual assault).

Also consistent with TPB is intervention in the social context and perception of normative beliefs (e.g., athletics and gender roles; Ajzen, 2005; Chapleau & Oswald, 2013; Hayes et al., 2016; McMahon et al., 2014; Young et al., 2016). The current study found that student athletes had a higher level of acceptance of rape myths and a more negative attitude towards bystander intervention compared to nonathletes. The current study supports the findings of McMahon (2010), which indicated that college students with higher levels of rape myth acceptance, particularly in the subscale *she lied,* showed a tendency toward victim blaming and were less inclined to engage in bystander intervention. McMahon's (2010) results also revealed that the rape myth subscale *it's not really rape* was shown to be the strongest predictor of bystander attitudes, such that those who endorsed the rape myth had negative attitudes toward bystander intervention. Additionally, Beshers and DiVita (2021) found that rape myths, *she lied* and *he didn't mean to*, were more strongly endorsed than the other subscales. Thus, the current study

not only supports findings in previous research but also suggests that feminist theory is an integral part of the framework. Specifically, the results indicated that misogyny underpins socially constructed power relations (i.e., if males are entitled to sexual access, then rape does not exist, and females who claim to have been raped must have asked for it, deserved it, or lied about it; MacKinnon, 1989).

Limitations of the Study

Although the present study aimed to fill the gap in literature related to rape myth acceptance and attitudes towards bystander intervention within a specific college athlete subgroup, there are still several limitations. The present study was limited to college students, currently enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate program at a private university located in the Northeast region of the United States. Additionally, participants were predominantly White and identified as female. Therefore, the findings may not generalize to all division III athletes or to a more racially or ethnically diverse college student population. Additionally, the study relied on individuals who self-selected to participate in the survey-based research. Thus, the results may be different from those who do not choose to participate in research, further limiting generalizability of the results.

Another limitation is that the findings were based on participant's self-report. Self-reports may be skewed based on a participant's willingness to report honestly. For example, athletes may exhibit social desirability bias by rejecting rape myths due to the national campaigns and educational programs that target student athletes. Although the survey was anonymous, there may still be pressure to respond in a way that increases

social desirability. However, previous research related to rape myth acceptance and bystander intervention has relied on self-report measures and found support in terms of reliability and validity of the instruments used in the current study (McMahon et al., 2014; Payne et al., 1999; Yule et al., 2022).

Response bias can also occur when eligible participants do not respond to the survey request or withdraw from the study before its completion due to fatigue. Web-based surveys have been found to lead to reporting of more extreme views and behaviors when compared to an in-class survey (Wells et al., 2011). Furthermore, research suggests that among college students, bias response rate is higher for White females, and disproportionately low for African Americans (Sax et al., 2003). It is unknown the extent to which response bias may have impacted the findings of this study.

Lastly, a potential limitation is capturing an individual's behavior by essentially having the participant consider hypothetical situations (i.e., situations involving bystander intervention), creating a response consistent with their ideal version of self, rather than real-world behavior. Participants may anticipate emotional and behavioral reactions based on previous situations or simply guess, not having ever experienced a comparable situation, which may also increase social desirability. Although thoughts, attitudes, and intentions are the nearest antecedent to behavior (Ajzen, 2005), the current study did not assess actual bystander behavior in a real-world situation.

Recommendations

Future research on rape myth acceptance and attitudes towards bystander intervention should expand the population used in this study to include a more diverse

racial and ethnic body of students from different regions. Additionally, research should expand the diversity within athletics itself (i.e., team versus individual sports and divisions). The current study compared student athletes and nonathletes; however, given athletics is not a monolithic culture (McMahon, 2005), future research should examine the various differences that may contribute to rape myth acceptance and attitudes toward bystander invention within the student athlete population alone (i.e., without comparison to nonathletes).

The present study revealed that specific rape myths predicted an individual's attitude toward bystander intervention in specific situations. Although the current study did not examine the effects of specific educational interventions/programs on rape myth acceptance or their influence on attitudes towards bystander intervention, 59.07% of the participants indicated that they had no previous education related to sexual violence prevention, and 11.81% indicated that they were not sure if they had any previous education, prior to completing the survey. Therefore, there is evidence to suggest that the findings in the current study may be a result of a lack of education and prevention programming. University data showed that all the first-year students (freshmen) completed a mandatory online module upon entry to the fall semester and the majority of student athletes also attended an in-person session related to sexual assault prevention and bystander intervention. This suggests that a one-time program does not have a lasting impact on college students, particularly if it is only done at the beginning of their college career or during an orientation when they are overwhelmed with so much other information. Therefore, future research should also consider a longitudinal design to

investigate the influence of prevention programs that occur more frequently throughout the college experience.

Implications

Previous studies indicated that prevention programming is effective in reducing rape myth acceptance, encouraging positive attitudes towards bystander intervention and reducing sexual violence on college campuses (Banyard, 2008; Dills et al., 2016; Katz & Moore, 2013; McMahon, 2010; McMahon, et al., 2014; Moynihan et al., 2015). However, previous research also indicates other factors, such as empathy, gender norms, and benevolent sexism, influence attitudes towards bystander intervention. Therefore, it is important to investigate, further, how prevention programs can not only educate about rape myths to reduce acceptance, but also encourage implementation of various skills (e.g., emotional intelligence, assertiveness, and conflict resolution training). The perception of one's ability to intervene is influenced by social norms, but also one's level of confidence in the social situations (Fouber et al., 2010; Leone et al., 2021; Moynihan et al., 2010; Moynihan et al., 2015; Yule et al., 2022). Additional training may improve the confidence in one's ability to intervene and can promote positive social change.

This study's findings may lead to positive social change by informing college/university administrators and educators, responsible for sexual violence and prevention education on college campuses, about factors that can influence a person's decision to intervene as a bystander. To encourage dialogue and reduction of rape myth acceptance, rape myths education is vital to enhancing attitudes towards bystander intervention. This is particularly true for the college student athletes who are often siloed

in their athletic culture. Leveraging student athlete leaders, such as those who participate in the Student Athlete Advisory Committee, to dismantle the norms that may perpetuate rape myth acceptance and take responsibility for promoting bystander intervention and cross dialogue with nonathlete peers, will promote positive social change.

Conclusion

Sexual violence is a public health problem and one that college campuses have been attempting to manage for decades. The intent of this study was to examine factors that may contribute to the problem on a college campus. The current study supports previous research that found rape myth acceptance plays a significant role in a college student's attitude towards bystander intervention. Additionally, the results revealed that athlete status influences one's attitude towards bystander intervention, such that athletes are less likely to have a positive attitude towards bystander intervention. Finally, the study supports previous research showing that gender plays a significant role in a person's attitude towards bystander intervention, with females having more positive attitudes towards intervention than males. This study provides support for the need to improve educational and training programs to enhance prevention efforts on college campuses. It is not enough to provide online educational modules about rape and myths and a one-time bystander intervention training. Given that attitudes and beliefs are developed over time and through social norming, sexual violence education and programming needs to occur multiple times throughout a student's college career and in multiple formats (i.e., online, in-person, poster campaigns, etc.). Furthermore, programs should include student athletes who have high social status to promote positive social

change and dismantle any outdated or current norms that encourage rape myth acceptance within the culture.

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Appendix A: Permission Letter

From: [redacted] <[redacted]>
Sent: Monday, January 10, 2022 9:32:14 AM
To: Del Rey Honeycutt <[redacted]
Subject: AU research data

Dear Walden IRB,

This letter is to verify that Del Rey Honeycutt developed the 2018 Health & Wellness survey as part of her role when employed at [redacted] University. She is approved to use the data to complete the study for her dissertation.

Please let me know if I can provide any further information.

Sincerely,
[redacted]

[redacted]
Provost & Vice President Academic Affairs

Appendix B: BAS Proactive

Figure B1

Normal P-P Plot: BAS Proactive

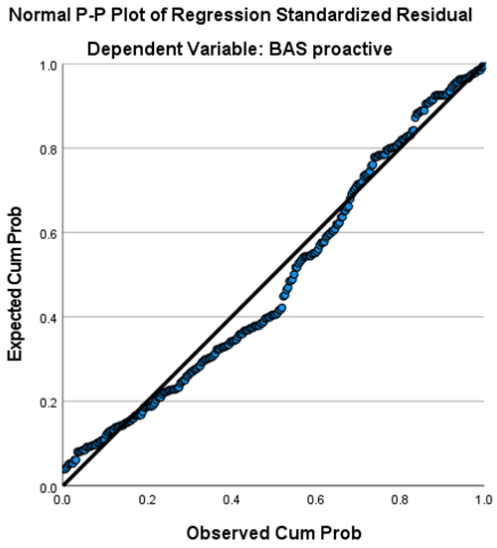


Figure B2

Normal Q-Q Plot: BAS Proactive

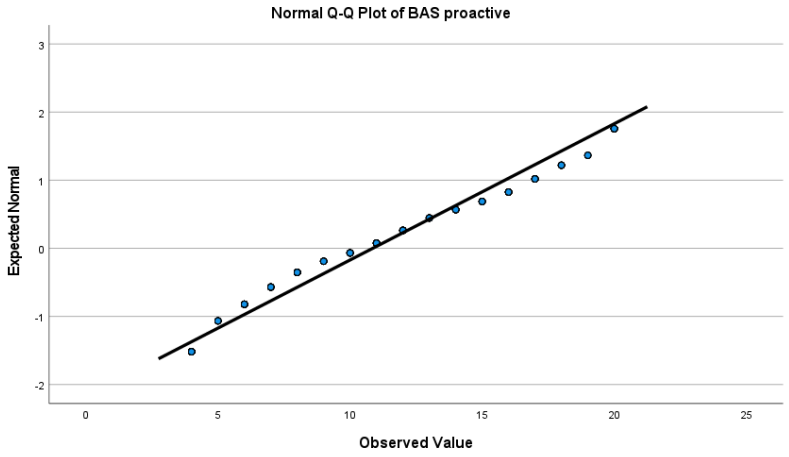


Figure B3

Detrended Normal Q-Q Plot: BAS Proactive

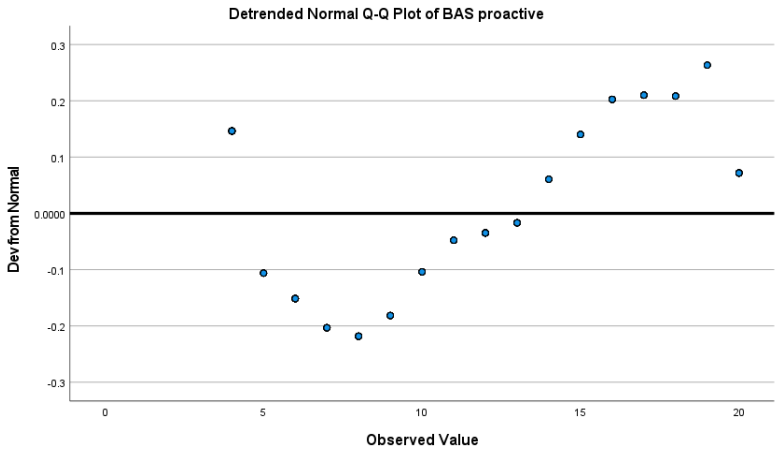
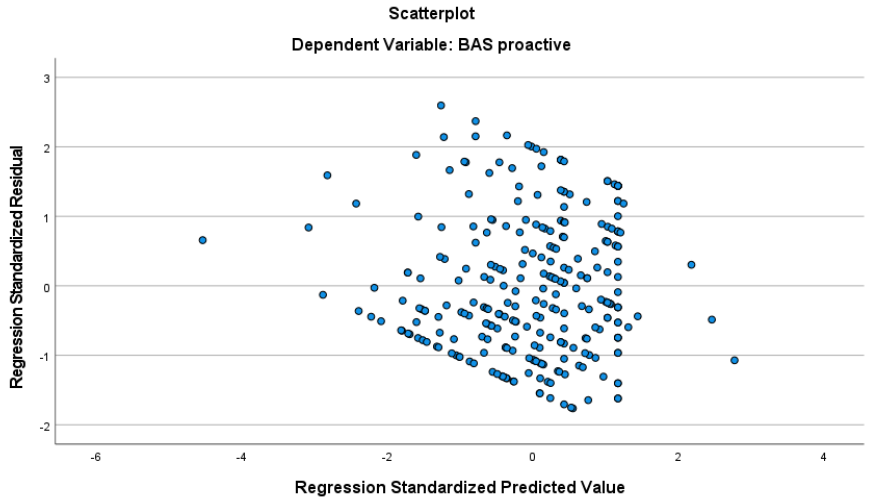


Figure B4

Scatter Plot: BAS Proactive



Appendix C: BAS High Risk

Figure C1

Normal P-P Plot: BAS High Risk

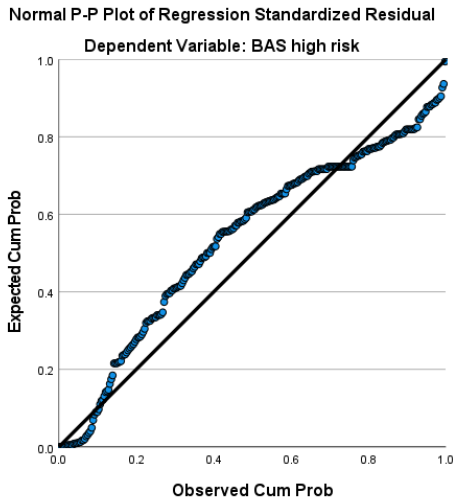


Figure C2

Normal Q-Q Plot: BAS High Risk

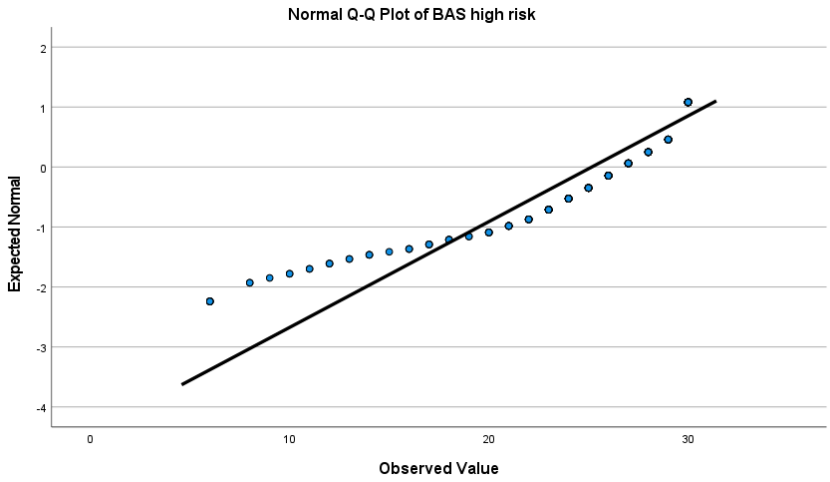


Figure C3

Detrended Normal Q-Q Plot: BAS High Risk

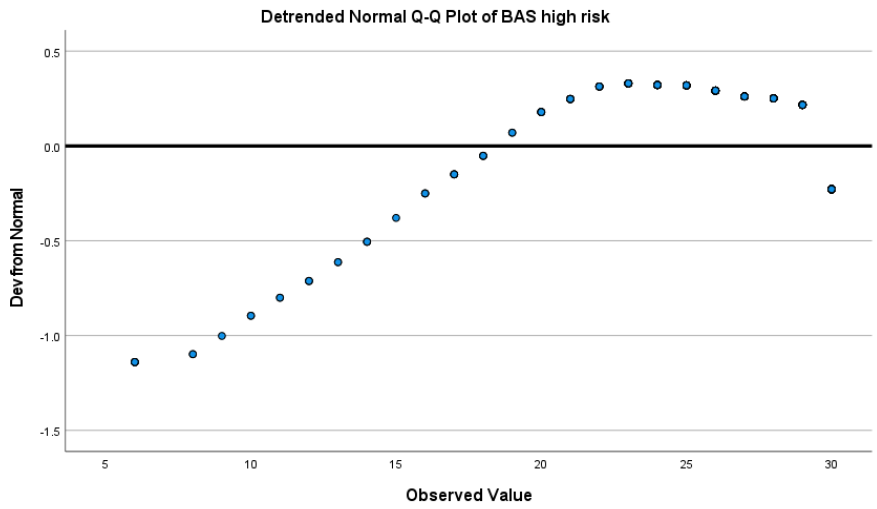
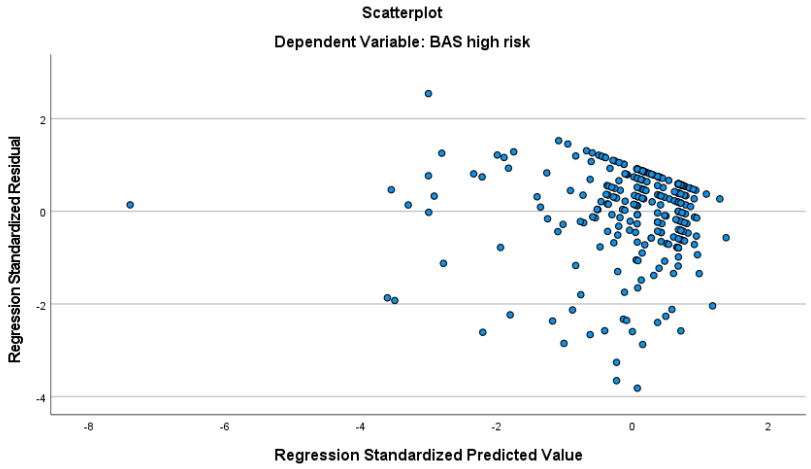


Figure C4

Scatter Plot: BAS High Risk



Appendix D: BAS Post Assault Reporting

Figure D1

Normal P-P Plot: BAS Post Assault Reporting

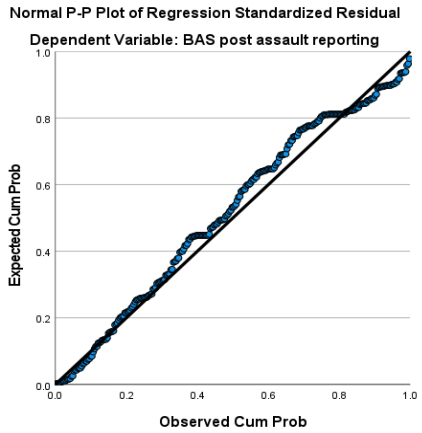


Figure D2

Normal P-P Plot: BAS Post Assault Reporting

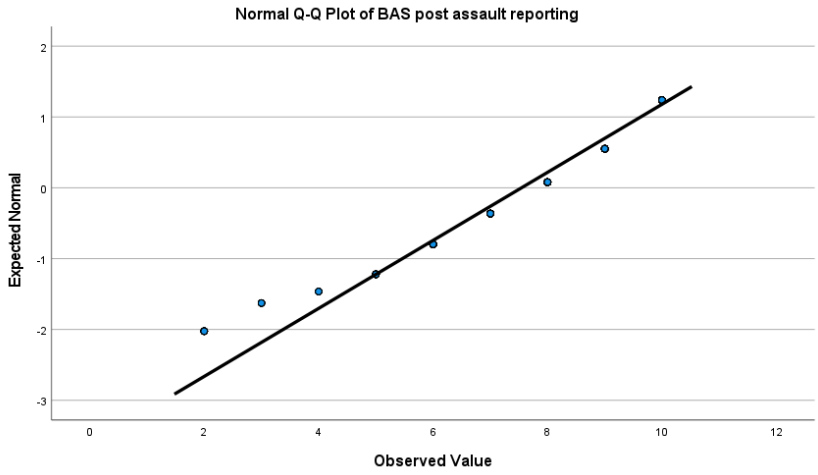


Figure D3

Detrended Normal Q-Q Plot: BAS Post Assault Reporting

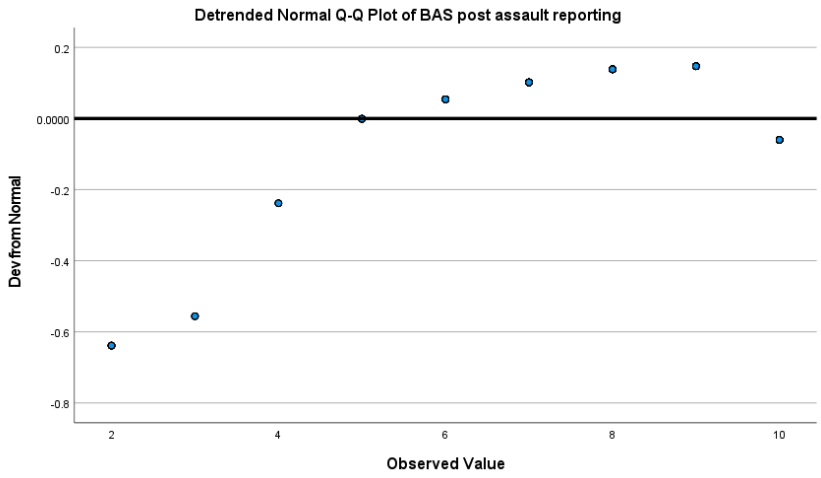
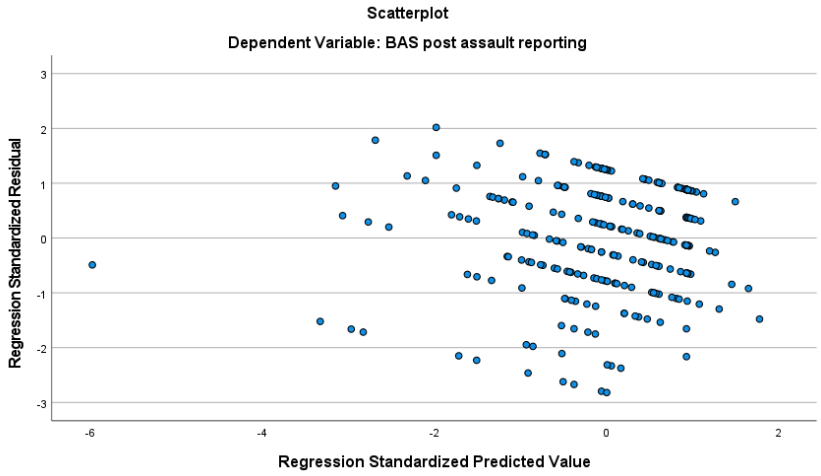


Figure D4

Scatterplot: BAS Post Assault Reporting



Appendix E: BAS Post Assault Support

Figure E1

Normal P-P Plot: BAS Post Assault Support

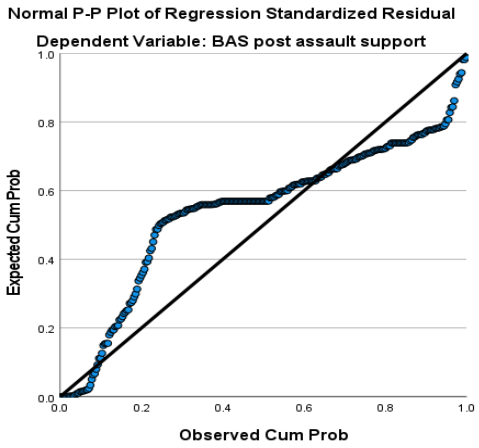


Figure E2

Detrended Normal Q-Q Plot: BAS Post Assault Support

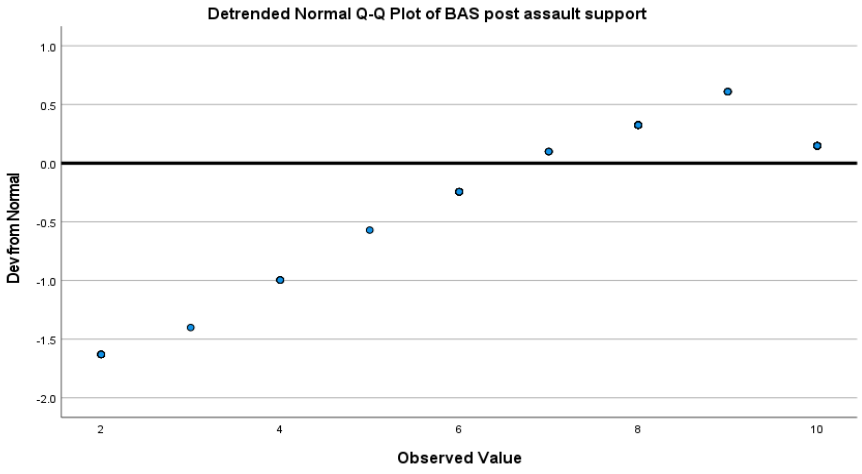


Figure E3

Scatterplot: BAS Post Assault Support

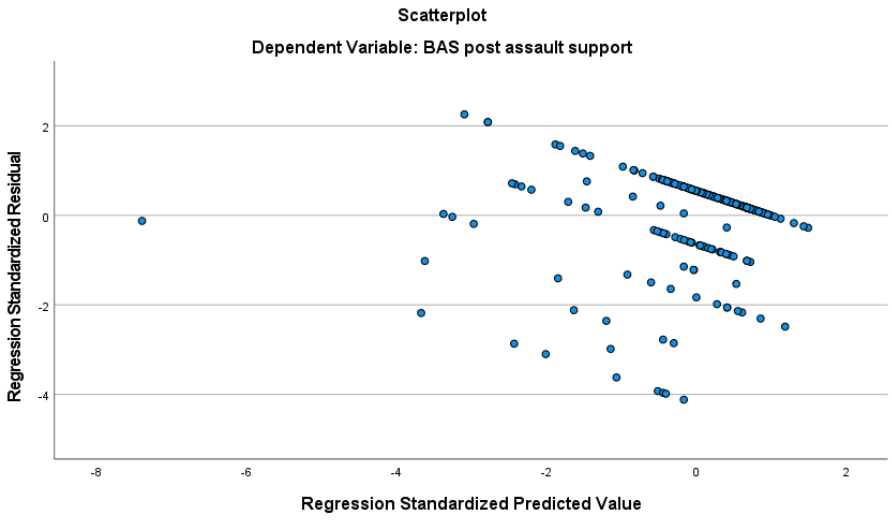


Figure E4

Normal Q-Q Plot: Post Assault Support