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College Sexual Assault Prevention Programs: A Literature Review

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Abstract

A critical literature review is employed to evaluate the efficacy of sexual assault (SA) prevention programs on college campuses with special attention to cross-cultural application. SA prevention programs are required on college campuses but are rarely evaluated for efficacy. This review draws upon information and recommendations of preeminent authors in the field of SA research, using information gathered from peer-reviewed journals and textbook chapters in order to apply what is known about SA prevention and cultural supports for SA to the generation of culturally relevant SA prevention. The author explores how the cultural supports for SA, including gender roles and rape myths, vary across cultures and influence sexual victimization rates with an end goal of honoring cultural diversity and tailoring SA interventions to meet the needs of a multiethnic audience.

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COLLEGE SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION PROGRAMS:

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Abstract

A critical literature review is employed to evaluate the efficacy of sexual assault (SA) prevention programs on college campuses with special attention to cross-cultural application. SA prevention programs are required on college campuses but are rarely evaluated for efficacy. This review draws upon information and recommendations of preeminent authors in the field of SA research, using information gathered from peer-reviewed journals and textbook chapters in order to apply what is known about SA prevention and cultural supports for SA to the generation of culturally relevant SA prevention. The author explores how the cultural supports for SA, including gender roles and rape myths, vary across cultures and influence sexual victimization rates with an end goal of honoring cultural diversity and tailoring SA interventions to meet the needs of a multiethnic audience.

Keywords: Sexual assault prevention, rape, rape myths, cross-cultural applications, gender roles, literature review, ethnicity

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Introduction

American culture supports the sexual victimization of women by perpetuating rape myths

and stereotypic gender roles (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; 1995). Sexual assault (SA), including

rape, is the only type of violent crime of which women are more often victims than men (U. S.

Department of Justice, 2005). Rape is associated with many acute and long-term physical and

psychological effects, including physical injuries, sexually transmitted diseases, and

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (Resnick & Acierno, 1997; Schewe, 2007). The reduction of these

effects is beneficial to the health care system, as well as the individual women affected

(Kilpatrick & Resnick, 1997; Schewe, 2007). Sexual victimization rates are higher in the college

student population than in the general population making the college student population a prime

target for intervention (Gidycz et al., 2001; Yeater & O'Donohue, 1999). According to the

Institutional and Financial Assistance Information for Students Act (1990), in order to participate

in the federal financial aid program, American colleges and universities must make SA

prevention programs available to their students. However, there is no requirement for the

institutions to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs offered (Gidycz et al., 2001; Heppner,

Humphrey, Hillenbrand-Gunn, & DeBord, 1995).

Investigations into the effectiveness of SA prevention programs have provided

inconsistent results because authors' definitions of effective and measurement vary (Anderson &

Whiston, 2005). Programs are developed to change attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge, or a

combination of these three (Heppner et al., 1995). Though a program's effectiveness is most

often demonstrated through pretest posttest design methods (Anderson & Whiston; Lonsway &

Kothari, 2001), it is often unclear whether these changes are stable over time (Heppner et al.).

Though often the ethnic composition of the subject pool is reported this data is rarely utilized to

evaluate the efficacy of a program across ethnicities (Heppner et al.). It is also the case that most SA prevention studies occur at a single campus, thereby limiting the cross-cultural comparisons further. Due to the diversity within the United States of America, a multicultural approach should be taken to address sexual assault prevention (Kennedy & Gorzalka, 2002).

Prevention programs come in different packages. The most popular are theatrical presentations (Schewe, 2002). Others often consist of didactic presentations, or mixed media presentations that include films. The researcher's goals and theory of SA also influence the varied nature of techniques employed for SA prevention. There is disagreement in the field regarding whether the audience should be single or mixed-gender and whether cognitive or behavioral changes are desired. Because of the difficulty in proving behavioral change, effectiveness is most often demonstrated through research studies designed to measure participants' attitudes about SA (Anderson & Whiston; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Schultz, Scherman, & Marshall, 2000; Yeater & O'Donohue, 1999).

Through a meaningful examination of the existing literature on the topic of SA prevention, I will compare the SA prevention programs available in peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters published prior to 2009 found through the PsycINFO database using the following call words: rape, acquaintance rape, sexual assault, sexual attitudes, rape myths, gender roles, sex, college students, prevention, culture. Specific authors, articles, and chapters will also be searched for through PsycINFO in order to follow up on information discovered in my reading of other materials. I will evaluate the state of SA prevention programming on college campuses in the United States of America and synthesize recommendations for creating culturally competent programs. Through an examination of ethnocultural differences in supporting rape myths and stereotypic gender roles, I will build the argument that cultural

variations in the expression of gender roles impacts female sexual victimization and should, therefore, be taken into consideration when designing SA prevention strategies. First I will set the stage by discussing the cultural supports for sexual assault: gender roles and rape myths, followed by an analysis and critique of the available literature concerning SA programs. Finally, I will draw conclusions about the implications of my research and make suggestions for future research into the area of SA program development.

Cultural Supports for Sexual Assault: Gender Roles and Rape Myths

According to feminist theorists, violence against women, including sexual assault, is excused by and perpetuated within a society that supports male dominance and female oppression through the use of gender role expectancies (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; White & Sorenson, 1992). Gender roles are the socially sanctioned expressions of biological sex within society. An example of male gender role expectancy is earning the majority of the family income. An example of female gender role expectancy is to stay home and care for children. Gender roles dictate heterosexual norms or sexual expression, sexual scripts (Brannon, 1996). An example of a masculine sexual script is to be aggressive in dating rituals. An example of a feminine sexual script is to be coy in dating rituals (Brannon). Rape often goes unrecognized because it follows our culturally sanctioned sexual script, which calls for masculine dominance and feminine submission (Benson, Charlton, & Goodhart, 1992). Rape myths are commonly believed stereotypes and untruths about rape that serve to justify male sexual aggression toward females and deny perpetrator culpability while blaming the victim for the assault (Burt, 1980; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Cultures in which strict adherence to gender roles is encouraged are structured on a hierarchy built on biological sex, that is they are patriarchal (Benson, et al.). Ideologically, patriarchy supports rape myths, thereby supporting female sexual victimization. I

will weave together information drawn from multiple ethnicities within the US and abroad to discuss how gender roles vary and are similar across cultures. The interplay of gender role traditionality and acceptance of rape myths is clearly delineated in the literature and provides a background for discussing the efficacy of SA prevention programs.

Ethnocultural Differences in Supports for Sexual Assault and Victimization Rates

Race and ethnicity are easier to quantify and measure than culture and are often used as a proxy for measuring cultural differences in the psychological literature because culture, race, and ethnicity are so closely intertwined. I will be using information from a mélange of studies with participants born in the US and abroad in order to first address sexual victimization prevalence across ethnicities. I will then compare and contrast ethnocultural groups on cultural supports for sexual assault, rape myths and gender roles. Specifically, I will address the interplay of gender roles with two misconceptions about rape: victim-blaming attitudes and the belief that rape is perpetrated by strangers. I will conclude this section with an exploration into the interaction of gender appropriate behavior and sexual assault avoidance strategies.

Conflicting reports of sexual assault prevalence rates are common in the SA literature. This is true for women as a whole but is more apparent when comparing women across ethnicities because of the lack of reporting and researching into ethnic differences. Most studies indicate higher victimization rates for Caucasian women. However, Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski (1987) found that Native American women were disproportionately affected by sexual assault. The results of their study were alarming and showed that 40% of the Native American women ($N = 20$), 16% of the Caucasian women ($N = 2,655$), 12% of the Hispanic women ($N = 106$), 10% of the African American women ($N = 215$), and 7% of the Asian women ($N = 79$) were the victims of SA (Koss et al., 1987). The researchers administered the Sexual

Experiences Survey (Koss & Oros, 1982) to both men and women on multiple college campuses in the US. Many women reported repeated incidents of victimization, though it is unclear whether they were victimized by one or more men. A total of 353 rapes were reported by 207 women. A total of 837 episodes of sexual coercion were reported by 366 women. A total of 2,024 episodes of unwanted sexual contact were reported by 886 women (Koss et al.). Women are repeat victims and men are repeat offenders. The 1165 incidents of unwanted sexual contact and coercion were reported by 541 men.

Studies comparing North American majority Caucasian and Asian samples have consistently found that Asian samples are more likely to endorse rape myths, adhere to more traditional gender roles, and are less likely to acknowledge or report sexual victimization. In a sample comprised Canadian-born students of mixed ethnicities and foreign-born Asian students, Kennedy and Gorzalka (2002) found that ethnocultural differences accounted for greater variation in rape myth acceptance than gender. These results were mediated by acculturation when the length of time in Canada was factored into the analysis. Of the Asian participants, those who had lived in Canada the longest were significantly less likely to endorse rape myths (Kennedy & Gorzalka). An exploratory study was conducted at a university in Hawaii to assess the victimization rates across ethnicities on campus. The authors noted that this study was prompted by the realization that the women utilizing the sexual assault resource center were disproportionately Caucasian in comparison to the ethnic composition of the island and university. Through a process of sampling students in freshman courses they discovered many unacknowledged victims (i.e., those who do not label their experience SA though their experience meets legal definition). Ethnically Caucasian and Japanese women had the highest victimization rates. Of the total sample, 39% of the Caucasian women reported sexual

victimization and 17% of the Japanese women reported sexual victimization. The majority (89%) of the women who reported sexual victimization were victimized by someone they knew, making them victims of acquaintance rape (Mills & Granoff, 1992). Despite having experienced sexual assault, the Japanese women at the university were reticent to report their victimization. The authors theorized that Japanese women may adhere to more traditional gender role socialization than Caucasian women, making them less likely than Caucasian women, to stand up to men or say no to sexual encounters with men (Mills & Granoff).

Researchers typically use race or ethnicity to categorize samples and compare groups. One caution in comparing groups based on ethnicity is the varying levels of acculturation to Western ideals represented within one ethnic group. For instance, Asian participants are often measured as a homogenous group despite the category comprising people from countries ranging from India to Japan as well as Pacific Islanders and Americans of Asian and Pacific Islander descent. One fault of Kennedy and Gorzalka's (2002) study is the researchers' choice to collapse Asians into one category. The majority of the Asian participants (92%) identified as ethnically Chinese, therefore the results may better reflect attitudes held by Chinese than by all Asians. Despite this, it is clear that there are ethnocultural differences in the belief in rape myths that can be tied to the adherence to traditional gender roles within the culture.

Cultural supports in depth I: victim-blaming. Although cultures vary in degree of victim-blaming, the phenomenon is present across cultures and stems from a belief that men who commit rape are "sick" or incapable of controlling sexual urges and that the women who are raped have somehow enticed the man, sending the message that men who rape cannot help themselves (White & Sorensen, 1992). Victim-blaming appears to be connected with the recognition and reporting of sexual assault. Women from cultures in which SA victims are not

believed or are blamed for their victimization are less likely to report their own victimization and may be more inclined to internalize blame for their victimization (Lefley, Scott, Llabre, & Hicks, 1993; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Willis, 1992). It has been previously noted that in most cases, Caucasian women comprise the largest group of reported victims. Caucasian women are also more likely to be believed when they report sexual victimization. A sample of 444 undergraduate students of multiple ethnicities read transcripts of a rape trial in which the victim and perpetrator's race were manipulated to create four scenarios (White victim/White perpetrator, White victim/Black perpetrator, Black victim/Black perpetrator, and Black victim/White perpetrator). Participants were significantly more likely to attribute blame to Black victims and were less likely to believe the testimony of Black victims (Willis). Other researchers have demonstrated that Black participants were significantly less likely to believe female rape victims after reading rape vignettes (Lefley et al.; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Mexican Americans are more likely than Caucasian Americans and African Americans to blame victims and question the legitimacy of rape claims (Lefley et al.; Williams, 1984). They are also less likely than Caucasian Americans and African Americans to seek prosecution of perpetrators. It has been theorized that women who adhere to their culture's rape myths and gender roles are more likely to internalize blame (Lefley et al.).

Ethnic, national, and gender differences in adherence to traditional gender roles and the belief in rape myths support SA across cultures. Women from cultures with more traditional gender roles, such as Asian and Mexican cultures are more likely to internalize blame and are less likely to report their sexual victimization because they believe rape myths which place blame on the women for sexual victimization.

Cultural supports in depth II: relationship to perpetrator. Sexual assault victim believability is influenced by the victim's ethnicity and by the severity of the attack. Sexual assault encompasses all forms of sexual victimization. Rape is often thought to be the most severe, or the worst of this continuum. Even within the category of rape, the assessed severity is mitigated by the closeness of the relationship between victim and rapist. That is, the more close the relationship, the less likely to be classified as rape - marital rape often thought not to exist (Benson et al., 1992; Ramos Lira, Koss, & Russo, 1999; Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005). An exploration of sexual assault with college women would be incomplete without a discussion of acquaintance rape because acquaintance rape victims are most often in their late teens and early 20s, making college campus population rife with potential victims (Mills & Granoff, 1992). I will begin by addressing the consequences of believing that sexual assault is perpetrated by strangers, then discuss some cultural differences in the conceptualization of sexual assault and rape.

Despite the commonly held belief that rape is committed by strangers in dark alleys, acquaintance rape is more common than stranger rape and is more difficult to prosecute or recognize because the perpetrators often use verbal coercion leaving little physical evidence (Mills & Granoff, 1992). A longitudinal design was employed to assess the rate of violent victimization of women attending the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. A total of 1569 women participated in the study. The sample was comprised of 70.9% Caucasian, 25.3% African American, and 3.8% other ethnicities. Using the Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss & Oros, 1982), researchers collected data about the women's sexual victimization history from the age of 14 through undergraduate studies. Rape through verbal coercion (21.1%) and rape through physical force (21.1%) were equally common occurrences for these women through

adolescence and young adulthood, and a statistically significant majority of the perpetrators of sexual violence against these women were their intimate partners (Smith, White, & Holland, 2003). For these victims, their families, and law enforcement may, therefore, be more likely to believe the victim was complicit in the act. There is evidence to show that the vast majority of acquaintance rape victims do not seek support from the police or victims' advocacy groups in part, because they do not consider themselves to be rape victims (Koss, 1985).

In an attempt to gain a more accurate account of rape victimization rates than previously available, Koss (1985) also employed the Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss & Oros, 1982) to collect data from both acknowledged and unacknowledged rape victims. The survey utilizes behaviorally specific questions to inquire about prior sexual experiences that range from consensual to sexual assault and rape under Ohio law (Koss; Koss & Oros). According to data collected by Koss, a mere 4% of the women who met definition of rape reported it. Although a logical hypothesis would be that unacknowledged rape victims adhere to rape myths, thereby increasing their blame and/or decreasing their assailant's blame, Koss did not find this to be the case. No significant differences in attitudinal measures were found between acknowledged and unacknowledged rape victims. That is, both groups strongly disagreed with rape myths. Asian populations have been shown to be significantly more likely than Caucasian participants to believe that rape is a crime committed by strangers and that women provoke rape which has led to the hypothesis that Asian women may be more likely than Caucasian women to be sexually victimized by someone known to them and may reduce the reporting rate for female Asian acquaintance rape victims (Lee, Pomeroy, Yoo, & Rheinboldt, 2005; Mills & Granoff, 1992). As stated above, Koss found that women who had been sexually victimized by someone they knew were not significantly different from the rest of the sample in their belief in rape myths in

general, however, she did not mention whether there were differences on the specific beliefs that rape occurs between strangers and that women are to blame for rape. (Lee et al.; Mills & Granoff).

Through a qualitative study of Mexican American women in rural Arizona, researchers captured ideas about rape. The women in the study all identified as Catholic and were all Mexican immigrants. The authors hypothesized that conservative Catholicism influences the female gender role expectation of *Marianismo*. That is, that girls and women will be pure and motherly like the Virgin Mary. Women within this system are expected to protect their virginity and to have sex only with their husbands. Female sexual assault victims and their male family members experience shame for not defending against the assault. The adherence to conservative Catholic ideals also influences the belief in sex for procreation, and can also encourage women to be subservient to their husbands. In a social system in which women are expected to give in to their husbands, rape between spouses is incomprehensible (Ramos Lira et al., 1999).

The concept of rape without force within the context of a relationship has been studied with North American Caucasian populations as well. The term "Rape by acquiescence" was coined by Basile (1999) to describe the experience of women who give in to unwanted sex in order to avoid negative consequences. Typically these women report giving in after repeated begging, manipulation, and pressure. They also reported giving in because the perpetrator used his authority, threats of negative interpersonal consequences, or threats of violent consequences (Basile). This type of rape most often occurs within the context of an intimate relationship and it is possible that in these situations the perpetrator believes he has gained consent due to the victim's capitulation (Livingston, Buddie, Testa, & VanZile-Tamsen, 2004). The two rape myths purported to drive rape by acquiescence are the belief that women are obligated to have sex with

a man if they have had sex with him on a prior occasion and the belief that women engage in token resistance to sex. Both men and women are likely to believe in these myths thereby driving female acquiescence. Livingston et al. theorized that perpetrators would employ different tactics depending on whether there was sexual precedence (i.e., a previous sexual encounter). They found that force decreases and coercion increases as a function of the level of intimacy and length of the relationship. Women were substantially more likely to be coerced into sex by men with whom they had an existing sexual relationship. There was also a significant difference in the coercion rates perpetrated by men who were known to the victim versus strangers (Livingston et al.). Of the total sample 19% (125 women) of the participants' most recent sexual victimization was categorized as capitulation after verbal sexual coercion (Livingston et al.). Reasons for capitulation were coded as extrinsic factors, such as "saving the relationship" and intrinsic factors such as "guilt". Koss (1985) set out to find whether differences in personality could explain victimization. Of the characteristics measured, no significant differences were found that distinguished victims from non-victims. Despite this, other researchers have hypothesized that personality characteristics such as low self-esteem and low assertiveness may be correlated with sexual coercion victimization (Livingston et al.).

Acquaintance rape occurs across cultures and accounts for a large portion of rape, though is often not reported. Researchers have attempted to identify characteristics of potential victims, such as the adherence to traditional gender roles, and communication style with little success. In the following section, gender role socialization and rape-avoidance strategies will be explored.

Gender Roles and Rape-Avoidance Strategies

The effect of gender role socialization can be seen in rape-avoidance strategies. Women who behave in-line with their gender (e.g., cry, beg) are more likely to be raped than women who

fight back, yell, or flee (Bart & O'Brien, 1984; Schewe, 2002). Also of concern here is that unsuccessful tactics adhere to rape myths and sexual scripts. For instance, it is expected that women will "say no but mean yes" which means that they are unable to say no and mean no. How are women to resist SA if they are ignored. They are also blamed for not stopping things and for not preserving their virginity. Women can't win in this system. It may be that men do not take passive resistance strategies seriously, but women who fight back demonstrate the sincerity with which they are saying no. Men are more likely to commit rape when they perceive the consequences to be minimal and that the rewards outweigh the risks (Schewe, 2002). Society encourages women to be passive and men to be aggressive. In everyday life, including dating and sexual encounters, women are encouraged to be passive. It is no surprise that when faced with an attacker, women are unprepared to fight. Teaching self-defense strategies has been shown to increase women's confidence in confronting an attacker (Schewe, 2007).

In a study with 94 women who had been attacked in the 2 years prior to the interview and either avoided rape ($N = 51$) or been raped ($N = 43$) researchers discovered patterns among the two groups of women. The participants were recruited through advertisements and though were not a representative sample of women in the US, they were representative of the women who are most commonly sexually victimized. That is, young, single, White women. The experiences were categorized into six rape-avoidance techniques: a) fleeing or attempting to flee, b) screaming or yelling, c) begging or pleading, d) reasoning with or "conning" the attacker, e) using physical force, f) someone else intruded on the attack. Women who successfully avoided rape used a significantly greater number of strategies than those who were raped. Of the women who did not employ any resistance strategy ($N = 5$) all were raped (Bart & O'Brien, 1984). Many women reported fearing they would be killed should they fight their attacker. One can only

speculate about the reasons some women are killed in conjunction with rape. However, it is clear that fighting back did decrease the risk of being raped and increase escape from attack for these women who did survive. One limitation of this study is that the women were self-selected and disproportionately represented stranger rape victims. Based on the data from Bart and O'Brien it is unclear whether the same strategies are useful in acquaintance rape situations, which are more common than stranger rape.

We have seen that reacting to a sexual attack using the feminine tactics women are taught by society (e.g., crying) often leads to more severe injury and sexual victimization. Blaming victims for being raped is tantamount to blaming her for being a woman and excuses perpetrators by implying that women deserve rape. Women are blamed for not resisting rape but are not equipped with the tools to resist (Benson et al, 1992). Resistance to acquaintance rape is further complicated by the relationship of the victim and perpetrator. Women often oblige due to these relationship dynamics.

Information presented in the preceding section regarding the cross-cultural supports for sexual assault, rape myths and gender roles has set the stage for considering the implications of SA prevention programs for a variety of women. In the following section, available literature concerning SA prevention strategies will be critically reviewed, then in the forthcoming "Discussion, Limitations, and Future Directions" section, I will integrate the information and propose recommendations for constructing culturally relevant SA prevention programming.

Critical Literature Review of Sexual Assault Prevention Programs

Determining the efficacy of SA prevention programs across studies is difficult due to the varying theories, models, and measurement employed by researchers. First, I will review and critique the common measures used in the literature. Then, I will critique each program based on

the type of presentation, measurement style including whether short-term or long-term measures were used, and the type of change achieved (e.g., attitudinal, behavioral). Schewe and Bennett (2002) stated that the most appropriate method of evaluating interpersonal violence prevention programs is to assess the strengths and weaknesses, the population best served by the program, and the effect the program has on participants. Though I would prefer to evaluate the programs presented in this thesis in this way, the lack of information provided by researchers, such as program effect by group, make it an impossible endeavor across studies. Comparing programs is also complicated by a lack of transcripts because although most purport to debunk rape myths, the specific rape myths debunked and method of debunking are rarely explicated (Lonsway, 1996). Also, because the rape myths addressed in the program may be identical to those measured by rape myths questionnaires, participants may not be required to apply the knowledge to novel situations and therefore, may be memorizing information rather than learning (Lonsway).

Sexual Assault Prevention Proximal Measures

Researchers have had moderate success decreasing participants' negative attitudes toward sexual assault victims and decreasing participants' belief in rape myths (Anderson & Whiston, 2005; Lonsway, 1996; Yeater & O'Donohue, 1999). Despite an increase in SA prevention research in recent decades (Anderson & Whiston; Yeater & O'Donohue), few researchers have explored the relationship between victimization rates and participation in SA prevention programs (Gidycz et al., 2001; Yeater & O'Donohue). Schewe (2007) stated measuring victimization rates is implausible due to underreporting and therefore unrealistic as a means of demonstrating program efficacy. Because the measurement of victimization rates is difficult, other theoretically related constructs, or proximal measures, are often used to measure outcomes.

I have narrowed this exploration to speak about the most commonly used proximal measures, rape myths and behavioral intentions to measure changes in attitude and behavior. Through the discussion of common proxies and their measurement tools, including the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Burt, 1980), as well as a discussion of behavioral measurement including the Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss & Oros, 1982), I will explore the difficulty in demonstrating SA prevention program efficacy.

The Rape Myth Acceptance Scale. The most common proximal measure is the acceptance of rape myths (Schewe, 2002). Rape myths are common targets of SA prevention programs because distorted perceptions are often associated with sexual offending in men (Burt, 1980; Schewe, 2007). Despite a lack of evidence to tie rape myth acceptance to sexual victimization rates in women, rape myth acceptance is still the most commonly used proximal measure with women in the SA prevention literature (Schewe, 2007). Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1995) believe that rape myths serve different functions for men and women. They theorize that for men rape myths justify violence toward women and for women rape myths confirm their invulnerability for rape; That is, women believe they can avoid being raped if they do not engage in behaviors associated with rape myths (e.g., wearing revealing clothing, walking alone at night). Rape myths are perpetuated by sexual scripts and are commonly believed by both males and females. Belief in rape myths is most commonly measured by the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS) (Black, Weisz, Coats, & Patterson, 2000; Burt; Heppner, et al., 1995; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Schewe, 2002). Although standard in assessing SA prevention program efficacy, The RMAS (Burt) has been criticized for being outdated, lacking sensitivity, and lacking adequate validity.

Many items in the RMAS (Burt, 1980) may be outdated and lack adequate sensitivity to assess subtle beliefs about rape due to their obviousness, such as: "When women go around braless or wearing short skirts and tight tops, they are just asking for trouble" (Heppner et al., 1995; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). RMAS (Burt) scores are lower, on average, now than when the scale was first introduced in 1980 indicating a possible cultural shift in the acceptance of these myths, or an inability for the scale to assess rape myths present in modern North American society (Bryant, Mealey, Herzog, & Rychwalski, 2001; Milhausen, Mcbride, & Jun, 2006). The level of political correctness and awareness about SA has increased since 1980. Therefore, people who agree with the statements within the RMAS may also be aware that to endorse them is inappropriate reducing the content validity of the measure (Milhausen et al., 2006). Lonsway and Kothari (2001) pointed out that social desirability likely influences responses to the RMAS (Burt), as with other measures and therefore inflates success rates. That is, researchers who use the RMAS (Burt) may be inflating the success rate because participants are likely aware of the socially desirable responses and endorse fewer rape myths as measured by the RMAS (Burt).

Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1995) called into question the construct validity of the RMAS (Burt, 1980), and postulated that the measurement of rape myths by the RMAS (Burt) confounded with measures of hostility toward women. The authors conceptualized hostility toward women to include stereotypes about women's propensity for manipulation and vanity as well as the acceptance of multiple types of violence toward women. The authors proposed a reconceptualization of Burt's model that would separate the attitudes of hostility toward women from the belief in rape myths. The RMAS (Burt) was rewritten to update the language and to be a more pure measure of rape myths without items measuring hostility and administered to college students. Significant gender differences were found. Women continued to endorse rape

myths but did not endorse hostility toward women. Men continued to endorse both rape myths and hostility significantly more than women (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). The authors posit that the significant gender differences captured on measures of hostility toward women scales support their assertion that men use their hostility toward women to justify rape, whereas women would not endorse hostility toward women because it does not serve to distance themselves from the victims.

The RMAS (Burt, 1980) has been the most commonly used measurement tool across sexual assault studies since 1980, creating a wealth of research with a common anchor to measure effectiveness and making an argument for maintaining the RMAS (Burt) as *the* tool for SA prevention (Heppner et al., 1995). Though it has been a staple in the sexual assault literature, many researchers have altered questions to either suit their needs or to update the language, making comparisons across studies inaccurate.

The Sexual Experiences Survey. The Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) (Koss & Oros, 1982) is used to assess the level of sexual victimization among participants. The SES (Koss & Oros) was originally developed to identify "undetected" rapists and rape victims. The survey utilizes behaviorally specific questions to inquire about prior sexual experiences that range from consensual to sexual assault and rape under Ohio law (Koss, 1985; Koss & Oros). Three levels of victimization were defined as none, moderate (i.e., sexual victimization not including rape), or severe (i.e., rape) (Gidycz et al., 2001). The SES identifies rape victims who would not categorize their own experience as rape but whose experience does fall under the Ohio law as rape which includes penile or object penetration of vagina or anus through the use of coercion, force, or the threat of physical violence.

The SES (Koss & Oros, 1982) has been used with multiple populations within the US and abroad. Cronbach alpha was utilized to demonstrate internal consistency with female African American adolescents (Cecil & Matson, 2006) and female majority European American college students (Koss & Gidycz, 1985), ranging from .74-.80. High test-retest reliability has also been demonstrated, in the afore mentioned college sample as well as with a group of German adolescents with item agreement ranging from 93% - 95% (Koss & Gidycz; Krahé, Reimer, Scheinberger-Olwig, & Fritsche, 1999). Cecil and Matson demonstrated convergent validity by correlating outcomes with other constructs associated with sexual victimization (e.g., depression) as well as demonstrating discriminate validity, as scores were uncorrelated with unrelated variables (e.g., demographics). It is the most widely used survey across peer reviewed psychological and sociological journals for assessing levels of victimization (Gylys & McNamara, 1996) and reliability and validity rates are consistently above .70 (Cecil & Matson).

Some authors have theorized that using self-report measurement overestimates the amount of sexual victimization among women (Alksnis, Desmarais, Senn, and Hunter, 2000). However the SES (Koss & Oros, 1982) was developed with the intent to capture the presumably underreported number of victims. Overall, the SES (Koss & Oros) has been useful in providing information about victims across cultures and can be utilized to compare groups of women who have and have not reported their victimization to authorities and therefore, not present in the prevalence data provided by the authorities.

The measurement of SA prevention program efficacy is often demonstrated through the use of proximal measures, including the RMAS (Burt, 1980), because attitude change is often a goal of SA prevention researchers. Behavioral measures, such as the SES (Koss & Oros, 1982) are also utilized to measure actual rates of victimization among SA prevention program

participants. I have discussed the utility and draw-backs of using these measures in order to more easily facilitate a discussion of SA prevention program efficacy in the following section.

Sexual Assault Prevention Program Efficacy

In the following review of specific SA prevention programs researchers have used the aforementioned RMAS (Burt, 1980) and SES (Koss & Oros, 1982) and I have organized them based on the theories and goals of the researchers. Beginning with a theoretically based model, I move on to compare interactive and didactic presentations and programs that focus on attitudinal or behavioral change.

Heppner et al. (1995) based their SA prevention program on the elaboration likelihood model. This model specifies two types of processing attitudinal change. Through peripheral and central route processing relayed messages are absorbed. Through peripheral route processing individuals adjust their level of motivation depending on whether the message is appropriate for them. If the content is viewed to be inappropriate for the individual they will attend largely to peripheral data (e.g., feelings about the person delivering the message). Central route processing is a higher-level process in which the participant is engaged with the message, presumably creating more long-standing change in attitude. The researchers found significant gender differences in information processing styles. Men used more peripheral route processing and women more central route processing when attending a mixed-gender SA intervention. To compare the long-term effectiveness of SA prevention programs Heppner et al. divided 258 college students (129 females, 129 males) into two intervention groups and one control group. The *interactive drama* intervention consisted of an improvised heterosexual rape scene, after which, the audience rewrote the scene without the rape. The *didactic video* intervention contained facts and statistics about rape and stories told by survivors, followed by a question-

and-answer session. The control group participated in a stress management workshop. Male and female participants in both the interactive drama and didactic video interventions were significantly less likely to endorse rape myths post-intervention than were participants in the control group. However, the effects were not long-lasting, as evidenced by results of the follow-up measures administered 5 months later, at which time, no difference was found between participants in the intervention and control groups.

Similarly, Black et al. (2000) measured college students' (27 females, 11 males) attitudes toward rape prior to and after viewing a theatrical performance of a rape scene. Both genders endorsed significantly fewer rape myths after viewing the performance, than they had before the performance. However, the effect lessened over time. The gender-combined mean score for the RMAS (Burt, 1980) when assessed prior to the play was 27.7. After the play, the mean dropped significantly to 23.7 but when assessed 2 months after the play, the mean score rose to 25.3, which is not significantly different from the original score. The regression back toward original attitudes has been described as a *rebound* effect. It is possible that obviousness of the questions led participants to submit socially acceptable answers rather than reflecting a genuine change in attitude after viewing the performance and felt less obligated to do so later. Another possible implication of this information is that theatrical performances influence short-term attitudes about sexual assault, but that these attitudes are not maintained over time (Black et al.).

Rather than use the conventional pretest-posttest design, Lonsway and Kothari (2001) randomly assigned participants to three intervention groups. One group met prior to the start of the academic year, the remaining two groups met at different points during the academic year. The 2-hour obligatory intervention included a didactic and multimedia presentation in which participation was encouraged. Men and women were together for the educational portion of the

workshop then divided for the interactive discussion portion of the workshop. The goals of the intervention were simply to raise awareness about rape and sexual assault victim resources on campus. Attempts were made to mask the intent of the research, therefore, participants were given scenarios and self-report questionnaires involving multiple types of misconduct (e.g., hate crime, cheating) in addition to a scenario about rape. The questionnaires were administered to a regular classroom and students were asked to identify whether they had previously attended the required SA prevention workshop. Those who had were categorized by the length of time between the workshop and administration of the measures. Those who had participated in the program were significantly more knowledgeable about sexual assault and endorsed fewer rape myths. They were also significantly less victim-blaming than those who had not attended the SA prevention workshop. Participants with repeated exposure to the program were significantly less victim-blaming than those who had attended the program once. Perhaps a second intervention addressing more advanced ideas about sexual victimization would have a greater impact on the students (Lonsway & Kothari).

Despite the apparent success of this style of educational program, there is a lack of empirical evidence pointing to a negative correlation of sexual assault knowledge and sexual victimization. Nevertheless, the rational assumption linking these two ideas remains popular in the research (Anderson & Whiston, 2005). Schewe (2007) in his review of 33 SA programs found that programs targeting awareness or information are not effective. Programs that focus on presenting factual information, such as the definition of rape has had no effect on either participant's attitudes about rape, or their empathy for rape victims (Schewe, 2002).

Despite Schewe's (2007) assertion that measuring victimization rates is implausible, at least one research team has attempted to demonstrate their SA prevention program efficacy by

measuring victimization rates. Gidycz et al. (2001) developed a 3-hour, single-session interactive multimedia presentation for an all female college student population. Videos were presented, followed by role-play activities reinforced by discussion and handouts. The sample consisted of women from two universities (N = 752) (Gidycz et al.). Of them, 395 were assigned to the prevention group, and 357 to the control group. Women who had no history of sexual victimization prior to participation in the study were significantly less likely to be victimized at both the 2-month and 6-month posttest, indicating that history of sexual victimization is a risk factor for future sexual victimization. Rates of sexual assault assessed posttest positively correlated with the severity of prior sexual victimization. Of those who were "moderately" victimized (i.e., sexual contact other than rape) 30% of the prevention group and 70% of the control group were revictimized between the 2-month and 6-month follow-up periods. Analysis of results from Gidycz et al. indicates that participation in sexual assault prevention programs can reduce the risk of future sexual victimization.

The preceding section included information regarding SA prevention program efficacy. Unfortunately, due to limited data, no cross-cultural comparisons can be made regarding the efficacy for specific ethnocultural populations. In the "Cultural Supports for Sexual Assault: Gender Roles and Rape Myths" section, cross-cultural differences in the acceptance of rape myths was demonstrated and because decreasing rape supportive attitudes is the most often stated goal of SA prevention programs, ethnocultural differences in rape-supportive attitudes should not be ignored. An exploration of proximal measures demonstrated that the most commonly used measurement tool, the RMAS (Burt, 1980) may be outdated and inappropriate for further use with any culture. Behavioral intentions are the most often utilized proxy in studies that aim to alter behavior. Intentions are often measured because most human actions are under

rational control, so an individual's intentions are a reasonable predictor of their behavior (Schultz et al., 2000). Schewe (2002) has indicated that women are more inclined than men to change both attitudes and behaviors, though by proxy measurement shows mixed results for behavioral change. Comparing behavioral change across studies is complicated by the varying proximal measures. For instance, some researchers have measured intent to abstain from risky behaviors and others have measured intent to volunteer for SA prevention efforts. In the following "Discussion, Limitations, and Future Directions" section I will summarize and integrate the information on SA prevention program efficacy within the cultural context discussed in the "Cultural Supports for Sexual Assault: Gender Roles and Rape Myths" section, culminating in recommendations for creating culturally relevant SA prevention programming.

Discussion, Limitations, and Future Directions

Discussion

Race and ethnicity are measured as proxies for culture, though people born in North America are often categorized with immigrants and temporary residents by the limited demographic information captured by psychological researchers, creating a falsely homogenous group (Kennedy & Gorzalka, 2002). Ethnic categorization also often captures people from wide-ranging national heritage, further contributing to this idea of a falsely homogenous ethnic group. Because my thesis rests on the idea that culture influences gender roles, thereby influencing the SA prevention needs of women within specific cultures, I have paid special attention to the ethnocultural composition of the research participants within the studies of interest in order to compare differences. Though the literature focusing on cultural differences within SA prevention is scarce, I did utilize studies conducted in North America and Japan in order to compare Asian Americans with Japanese citizens. Compared to Caucasian and African American samples,

Asian college students in North America generally adhere to more traditional gender role expectancies and endorse more rape myths, including victim-blaming and the belief that acquaintance rape is uncommon (Kennedy & Gorzalka; Lee et al.; Mills & Granoff, 1992). They are also less likely than other college students to have been educated about sexual assault and therefore, Asian women have specific SA prevention needs and are likely at a greater risk of acquaintance rape than other female college students (Lee et al.).

Caucasian participants are the most well-represented group in SA literature, particularly because the majority of research utilizes college students (Lonsway, 1996; Schewe, 2007). Though most studies indicate that White women have the highest sexual victimization rates, some researchers have demonstrated that women of other ethnic groups are victimized at higher than expected rates (Kennedy & Gorzalka, 2002; Koss et al., 1987; Mills & Granoff, 1992). Many of these data are captured using the SES (Koss & Oros, 1982) which, using behaviorally specific questions, identifies undetected sexual victims. These women, despite endorsing items indicating an unwanted sexual experience, often do not classify the experience as sexual assault and have not reported the incident to police (Koss, 1985; Lee et al., 2005; Mills & Granoff, 1992; Smith et al., 2003). Women from ethnocultural groups in which victim-blaming is high, for example, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Mexican Americans, are less likely to recognize and report their own sexual victimization, perhaps because of internalized cultural ideas about women's responsibility to guard her sexuality (Lee et al.; Mills & Granoff; Ramos Lira et al., 1999). The common belief that rapists are strangers also, likely, influences the recognition and reporting of sexual victimization (Benson et al., 1992; Koss & Oros; Ramos Lira et al.; Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005). For cultural groups with strong affiliations to patriarchy and the preservation of a traditional marriage, such as some Catholic Mexican Americans, rape

within the confines of marriage is an occurrence, though is never categorized as rape because women are expected to be sexually available for their husbands (Ramos Lira et al.). Though only one small sample was utilized to capture this information, many other researchers have demonstrated that the majority of women reporting sexual victimization have been victimized by someone they know, often repeatedly (Basile, 1999; Benson et al.; Koss & Oros; Livingston et al., 2004; Smith et al., 2003). The closer the relationship, the more likely it is that nonviolent tactics are used, thereby giving women little evidence with which to prosecute the perpetrators. Women who fight back against their attacker are less likely to be raped than women who engage in passive resistance (e.g., crying) (Bart & O'Brien, 1984; Schewe, 2002). Perhaps because within the context of rape myths as cultural supports for rape, men expect women to "say no but mean yes". Because passive resistance tactics are the female gender role norm, women must be specifically taught to engage in physical resistance strategies to avoid rape.

Because rape myths support the sexual victimization of women, they are frequently the target of SA prevention programs and the most commonly measured construct used to demonstrate program efficacy (Anderson & Whiston, 2005; Lonsway, 1996; Schewe & Bennett, 2002; Yeater & O'Donohue, 1999). Programs are deemed successful if participants' attitudes toward rape have been altered. Rape-supportive attitudes have been correlated with sexual offending in men, but a clear correlation between rape-supportive attitudes and sexual victimization has not been demonstrated (Burt, 1980; Schewe, 2007). Therefore, behavioral measures are more appropriate for demonstrating SA prevention program efficacy with women. Unfortunately, behavioral measurement is difficult to obtain, especially as a follow-up measure which is necessary because pretest posttest measurement would be inappropriate to capture a

decline in victimization rates after intervention (Schewe, 2007; Schultz et al., 2000). For these reasons, SA prevention program efficacy is difficult to demonstrate.

Limitations and Future Directions

It is important to consider a multicultural approach when applying SA prevention to the college population, however, those who attend college are a privileged and select group in which ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity is relatively low (Gidycz et al., 2001). Because the cultural supports for sexual assault are present across cultures, I recommend sensitivity in applying them in a culturally-appropriate way in order to engage a mixed ethnic audience and reduce victimization rates across cultures. The elaboration likelihood model indicates that central route processing is ideal for absorbing information (Heppner et al., 1995). Therefore, creating SA programs in which culturally relevant material is presented will be more readily absorbed by participants. For instance, using actors of different ethnicities and addressing rape myths held by the culture of interest using stories from that culture to debunk the myths. This is true not only with ethnic groups but also sexual diversity. The focus of this thesis was heterosexual victimization, however, there is no reason to assume that gay men or lesbian women would not be sexually victimized or sexual perpetrators.

This thesis focused on prevention methods for use with young adult women, though through the process of preparing this review it became clear that sexual victimization in childhood and adolescence is a contributing factor to revictimization later in life (Koss et al., 1987; Gidycz et al., 2001; Schewe, 2002). Because many of the women participating in college-sponsored SA prevention programs will have already been sexually victimized, there may be a need for specific programming to address issues related to avoiding revictimization. It is unclear from this thesis whether there are ways in which the needs of those who have been victimized

differ from those who have not. It has been shown that SA prevention programs in college are more effective at preventing initial sexual victimization than repeated sexual victimization.

Though a goal of this work was to look cross-culturally for effective prevention strategies, the dearth of information regarding specific populations made the task difficult and was limited by the use of information published in English only. An effort should be made in future endeavors to address the questions proposed by Schewe and Bennett (2002). That is, programs should be evaluated for their effectiveness with specific populations, comparing populations on the same intervention when possible and evaluating strengths and weaknesses for better improvement. New measurement may be called for to assess whether changes in attitudes are correlated with behavioral changes, as well as victimization and perpetration rates. Though interactive drama presentations have shown mixed efficacy results, future studies must compare cultural groups to determine for whom the program is effective and for whom it is not effective. It is unclear how the acceptance of rape myths relates to sexual victimization, therefore, future research into either demonstrating a connection or measuring success using a better proxy is encouraged.

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