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Perceptions of Rape and Attitudes Toward Women in a Sample of Lebanese Students

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This study investigated values, ambivalent sexism, religiosity, religious differences, gender, and attitudes toward rape victims as predictors of rape myths in a sample of Lebanese students ($N = 300$). Values of self-transcendence and conservation, gender, hostile sexism, and attitudes toward rape victims emerged as significant predictors of rape myths, confirming some of the premises in the literature. Type of rape (date, marital, acquaintance, and stranger rape) and victim's characteristics (widowed, married, devout, promiscuous, and chaste) were also investigated. Results revealed that no matter what the relationship between the victim and her perpetrator was, and regardless of the victim's characteristics, forcible sexual contact was always considered as rape. However, differences did emerge as to the degree to which these variations were perceived as rape. Implication of findings for research and the Lebanese culture are discussed.

Keywords: *rape myths; Lebanon; sexism, culture*

Violence against women is a multifaceted type of aggression. It is a prevalent and global issue that affects women regardless of age, ethnicity, religion, or social status (Burn, 2000; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). Rape, an especially virulent and underreported form of aggression, is difficult to objectify when its definition hinges on societal norms. It is broadly defined as a forcible sexual assault (Knowles, 1999) that occurs without the consent of the victim (Rozee, 1993). However, attitudes toward rape and its victims depend on the culture in which the rape occurs (Rozee, 1993).

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Some widespread attitudes toward rape are known to be prejudicial. These are referred to as *rape myths* and are defined as “attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women” (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, p. 134). For example, those who endorse rape myths tend to believe that for rape to occur, the victim must be chaste, assaulted by a stranger, have signs of penile penetration, and have proof of resistance, evidenced by cuts and bruises (as cited in Rozee, 1993). Rape myths thus include assumptions that rape victims are promiscuous, have a bad reputation, or have an unconscious wish to be raped (Burt, 1980). However, these stereotypical situations and rape myths do not mirror the reality of this offense. The majority of perpetrators of rape and sexual abuse are acquainted with the victim (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002), a fact that has been supported by data from a wide range of countries such as the United States, Peru, Malaysia, and Panama (Heise, Pitanguy, & Germaine, 1994; Heise, 1994). In the United States, marital rape is the most common type of rape and is three to four times more prevalent than rape by a stranger (Monson & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2001). In Lebanon, around 50% of rape cases reported to the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Women were perpetrated by relatives of the rape victims (Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women, 1998).

Sociocultural norms and prejudicial attitudes are endemically associated with violence against women. Consequently, to understand rape, we should look at the cultural setting in which it occurs. This setting includes customs, traditions, laws, and even value systems (Martin, 2003). Although a series of studies have identified predictors of rape myths in samples across cultures, very few have investigated rape myths in Arab samples. Do certain value orientations contribute to higher endorsement of rape myths? Are there gender and religious differences in endorsement of rape myths in Lebanese settings? Is the evaluation of the severity of rape dependent on the perceived relationship between the perpetrator and the victim (e.g., date rape, marital rape, etc.), or the victim’s characteristics (e.g., virginity, widowed, etc.)? The aim of this study is to test predictors of rape myths in a sample of Lebanese students and investigate differences in rape perceptions when the type of rape and the victim’s characteristics are made to vary.

Studies on Rape Myths

Rape myths acceptance has been correlated with an array of factors that cut across multiple levels of analyses: cultural (e.g., values), social (e.g.,

demographic), and individual-level psychological variables (sexism, attitudes toward women, religiosity, etc.; e.g., Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, 1995).

For example, anthropological studies have revealed that some values play a pivotal role in the acceptance of rape. Specifically, in societies where men and women are equal (e.g., Sanday, 2003; Ward, 1995), where the sexes are believed to be complimentary (Watson, 2002), and where values such as partnership, egalitarianism, cooperation, and nurturance prevail (e.g., Helliwell, 2000; Sanday, 2003), attitudes toward rape and its perpetrators are significantly negative. In a meta-analytic review of the literature, Anderson, Cooper, and Okamura (1997) found that traditional gender role beliefs, adversarial sexual beliefs, needs for power and dominance, and conservative political beliefs were found to predict rape acceptance. It may thus be possible to propose that values that cater to the collective interest and foster principles of positive interaction, affiliation, and appreciation such as the value type of self-transcendence (e.g., benevolence, universalism; Schwartz, 1992, 1994) are not conducive to rape myths. On the other hand, individuals who value conservation (e.g., tradition, conformity, security) may be more likely to believe in traditional gender norms and thus would be more likely to endorse rape myths.

Studies have also shown that people high on hostile or benevolent sexism are more likely to endorse rape myths than those who score low on both forms of sexism (e.g., Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2007; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995; Viki & Abrams, 2002). Hostile sexism is characterized by attitudes toward women that fit the definition of blatant sexist prejudice (e.g., negative and resentful feelings about women's abilities, hostility toward women who challenge male power, etc.), whereas benevolent sexism is defined as a set of subjectively positive attitudes toward women that are nonetheless sexist in terms of perceiving women in traditional, stereotypical, and restricted ways that sustain women's subordinate status (e.g., patronizing attitude, casting women as fragile creatures that ought to be protected by men, etc.; Glick & Fiske, 1996). Hostile and benevolent sexism are powerful control systems, with the former punishing those who do not conform to traditional roles and the latter rewarding those who do. In a large 19-nation study, Glick et al. (2000) found hostile and benevolent sexism to be pervasive and negatively correlated with gender equality, such that the higher the means of benevolent and hostile sexism in a nation, the less gender equality prevailed.

Research is less clear on the relationship of other potential variables on endorsement of rape myths. For example, the role that religion and religiosity play in the endorsement of rape myths remains inconsistent, with some

studies showing a positive relationship between high religiosity and higher rape myths attitudes (e.g., Mulliken, 2005; Wong, 2005) and others showing no relationships between the two (e.g., Carr, 2006). This set of contradictory findings may warrant further investigation.

Relation Between Perpetrator and Victim in Perceptions of Rape

More recent developments have pointed to the importance of the perceived relationship between the perpetrator and the victim on attitudes toward rape. Biased perceptions and prejudice are correlated with *type of rape* (e.g., marital rape, date rape, stranger rape, etc.). For example, Simonson and Subich (1999) found that marital rape was less often described as rape in comparison with other types of rape; viewed as less serious, less brutal, and less often in violation of the rights of the victim; and considered to be less detrimental psychologically.

Similarly, studies have highlighted the importance of perceived relationship between victim and perpetrator, with higher perceived closeness between victim and perpetrator being associated with lower evaluation of the seriousness of the assault and a lower inclination to define the aggression as rape (e.g., Abrams, Viki, Masse, & Bohner, 2003; Golge, Yavuz, Mderrisoglu, & Yavuz, 2003; Munge, Pomerantz, Pettibone, & Falconer, 2007).

Both of these conceptual developments (type of rape and variations in the victim's characteristics) significantly add to our understanding of attitudes toward rape and require further empirical validation and exploration.

Rape in the Context of Lebanon

Lebanon is part of an Arab region described as patriarchal (Accad, 1990), patrilineal (Joseph, 1999), and an honor culture area (Accad, 1990; Barakat, 1993; Gregg, 2005; Joseph, 1999). In honor cultures, norms of precedence, toughness, assertiveness, and dominance are thought to be dominant for men, whereas modesty, shame, and avoiding conduct that might menace the family's good reputation (e.g., adultery or sexual immodesty) are thought to be dominant for women (Vandello & Cohen, 2003). The latter set of norms, which represents the honor of both male and female members of the family, rests on the women's sexual shame (Vandello &

Cohen, 2003), which is the men's duty to protect (A. H. Fischer & Rodriguez-Mosquera, 2001). The emphasis on male honor in these societies may therefore promote certain traditional gender roles and reinforce masculine concerns that excuse male anger and violence by using honor as justification for such violence (A. H. Fischer & Rodriguez-Mosquera, 2001; Vandello & Cohen, 2003).

Although sexuality remains a difficult topic to explore in the Arab world, a few studies have started to foray ahead (Khalaf & Gagnon, 2006). In a qualitative exploration of rape, Wehbi (2002, 2003) remarked that rape in the Lebanese context may be tied to the victim's characteristics, especially in how these characteristics affect the prospect of marriage. Specifically, Wehbi (2002, 2003) proposed that women who are perceived to have something to lose (such as virginity or a potential husband) are more likely to be considered rape victims than women who are divorced or widowed. The importance set on virginity and its association to rape are reflected in Lebanese law: Article 512 of the Lebanese penal code states that a man who rapes a virgin will get a higher sentence than someone who rapes a nonvirgin for a similar type of rape (Al-Zein, 2004). However, the importance of chastity to marriage may be less explicit than Wehbi states. Quantitative surveys among the Lebanese youth indicate that although virginity may be valued, it is not widely perceived as a precondition to marriage, nor are attitudes to sexuality as conservative and honor driven as speculated in the literature (Information International, 2003; Khoury & Khair-Badawi, 2003).

Predictors of Rape Myths

Specifically, and in line with current research, it is hypothesized that individuals who endorse conservation values, such as tradition and conformity, will be more likely to endorse rape myths, whereas participants who endorse values of self-transcendence will be less likely to do so. Furthermore, participants espousing sexist attitudes (either hostile or benevolent) or who hold negative attitudes toward rape victims will be more accepting of rape myths. Because of inconsistencies in the literature, no directional hypotheses are proposed for religiosity and religion in predicting rape myths, but male and female participants are expected to differ with male participants exhibiting higher levels of rape myths than female participants.

Type of Rape and Victim's Characteristics

Four types of rape are investigated in this study: stranger, acquaintance, date, and marital rape. It is hypothesized that the closer the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim the less rape will be perceived as rape. Consequently, perceptions of sexual aggression will be decreasingly associated with rape as the relationship changes from stranger, to acquaintance, to date to marital rape. On the other hand, it is also hypothesized that characteristics of the victim are likely to affect perceptions of rape. Five characteristics presumed relevant to the Lebanese context were investigated: married, chaste, divorced, promiscuous, and devout. It is hypothesized that promiscuous and divorced women will be most vulnerable, whereas chaste, married, and devout women will be less so.

Method

Design

The study uses survey instruments in a mixed model research design. A first set of items explores predictors of rape myths, whereas a second set of items uses a repeated measure approach measuring attitudes toward rape victims when contextual characteristics are made to vary (e.g., type of rape and the victim's characteristics).

Sample

A convenient sample of 300 Lebanese undergraduate students from the American University of Beirut (AUB) volunteered to participate in this study. Non-Lebanese students were excluded from the sample, and all participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their participation. The sample consisted of students from both genders (male, $n = 128$; female, $n = 165$; unspecified, $n = 7$) and from different religious backgrounds (Christians, $n = 136$; Muslims, $n = 136$; unspecified, $n = 28$), with an average age of 20 ($SD = 2$).

Instruments

Attitudes Toward Rape Victim Scale (ARVS; Ward, 1988). The ARVS was developed "to assess favorable and unfavorable attitudes with

particular emphasis on victim blame, credibility, deserving, denigration and trivialization" (Ward, 1988, p. 127). The scale assesses attitudes toward victims of rape and not attitudes toward rape in general, rape acceptance, or prevention. A 7-point Likert-type scale was used to assess the degree to which participants agreed, from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*), with each of the 25 items composing the scale. The ARVS is a widely used measure that has proven reliable across cultures (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Ward, 1988, 1995), and displayed a Cronbach's alpha of .85 in the present study.

Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS; Burt, 1980). The RMAS is the most commonly used measure of rape myths (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994) and studies "prejudicial, stereotyped or false beliefs about rape, rape victims and rapists" (Burt, 1980, p. 217). A 7-point Likert-type scale was used to measure the degree to which participants agreed, from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*), with 19 statements assessing their endorsement of rape myths. One section of the original instrument asked participants about a hypothetical scenario that was deemed inappropriate for a Lebanese sample. The scenario was reworded and incorporated in the *victim's characteristics* scale (see the Relationship to Victim and the Victim's Characteristics section). The RMAS had a Cronbach's alpha of .84 in the present study.

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996). The ASI is a 22-item scale that comprises two positively correlated but evaluatively different and opposing elements of sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Participants were asked to rate on a 7-point Likert-type scale, from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*), the degree to which they endorsed 11 items measuring benevolent sexism and another 11 items measuring hostile sexism. The ASI's convergent and divergent validity has been repeatedly assessed (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 1996), whereas its applicability across cultures has been verified in 19 nations (Glick et al., 2000). Cronbach's alphas in the present study for the benevolent and hostile sexism scales were .71 and .80, respectively. Moreover, a factor analysis of the scale yielded a perfect rotated solution with the items of benevolent sexism and hostile sexism loading on their respective factors.

Religiosity scale. Eight items derived from the intrinsic religiosity literature were used. Items were selected for their cultural relevance, sensitivity, and applicability in a culture in which large numbers of Christians and

Muslims coexist. Sample items include, "I consider myself a religious person," "My religion influences the way I choose to act in my routine life," and "Prayer to God is one of my usual practices." Items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*). The scale has been validated on a student sample of Iraqis (R. Fischer, Harb, Al-Sarrafe, & Nashabe, 2008) and a representative sample of Lebanese nationals. Internal consistency in this study was high, with a Cronbach's alpha of .93.

Basic Human Values Scale (Schwartz, 2002). The Basic Human Values Scale (Schwartz, 2002) is a 21-item instrument based on Schwartz's (1992, 1994) universal theory of values and has been adopted by the European Social Survey as an instrument measuring value orientations in its 30-nation research (European Social Survey, 2003). Schwartz (1994) proposed 10 different motivational value types based on the universal requirements of human existence: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security. This set of value types is arranged in a circumplex model that reflects the dynamic relation between them and can be organized along four higher order value types: openness to change, conservation, self-enhancement, and self-transcendence. The 21 items were rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not like me at all*) to 6 (*very much like me*). The Schwartz's Value Survey has been validated with more than 60,000 respondents from more than 200 samples in 67 nations (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000) and is the instrument of choice when measuring values across cultures.

Relationship to Victim and the Victim's Characteristics

To examine whether the relationship between the victim and her perpetrator shapes ones' attitudes and definition of the incident, a vignette inspired by the work of Simonson and Subich (1999) was used.

A scenario depicting an interaction escalating into rape between two individuals was constructed: "One night, Karim approached Yasmine and asked her if she were interested in having sex. Yasmine said 'no' very strongly, but Karim ignored her protest, grabbed her, and started kissing her. Yasmine tried to break free from Karim's arms but he forced himself unto her and completed the act of intercourse." The scenario was followed by asking participants to evaluate on a 7-point Likert-type scale, from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*), four sets of three items measuring the degree to which the aforementioned scenario was perceived as rape.

The four conditions were "Yasmine and Karim are strangers," "Yasmine and Karim are married," "Yasmine and Karim are neighbors," and "Yasmine and Karim are dating." Each of these conditions was followed by three items measuring the degree to which the scenario just described was perceived as rape: "Yasmine would be psychologically damaged by the incident," "Yasmine's rights were violated," and "Do you consider this incident as rape?" Internal consistency for the four types of rape (married, dating, neighbors, and stranger) was high, with Cronbach's alphas of .85, .85, .86, and .80 respectively.

A final item was directly derived from the RMAS scale but was modified to have a better fit within the Lebanese context. Participants were asked to imagine that "a woman comes to you and claims [that] she was raped," and then they are asked to rate on a 7-point scale to which degree they are likely to believe her if she were a promiscuous, or divorced, or married, or a chaste woman. The new categories were thought to provide a more culturally sensitive and relevant set of targets than the original ones that referred to White, Black, or Indian woman.

Pilot Testing and Validation

Because the research questions may be sensitive and potentially inappropriate in a Lebanese cultural context, a series of qualitative and quantitative tests were performed to assess the applicability and sensitivity of the scales. Small focus groups were asked to explore and discuss every item in the questionnaire and assess potential problems for students at the AUB. Six items were found to be redundant between the ARVS and the RMAS, and were thus dropped from the ARVS scale to avoid high multicollinearity problems. Although some items are not culturally appropriate to some of Lebanon's subcultures, they were found to be acceptable for undergraduate students at AUB. Categories for characteristics of the victim (e.g., chaste, devout, etc.) were explored in detail and were found to be exhaustive. Preliminary piloting indicated acceptable reliabilities for all the scales used.

Results

Scales' Descriptives

The means and standard deviations of the scales are presented in Table 1. The means were above the midpoint for the attitudes toward victims and

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of the Scales

Scale	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Benevolent Sexism	298	3.68	.85
Hostile Sexism	298	3.97	.98
Religiosity scale	297	3.19	1.62
ARVS	298	4.86	.83
RMAS	297	4.99	.90
Conservation	298	3.07	.89
Self-Enhancement	298	2.57	.81
Openness to Change	298	2.22	.83
Self-Transcendence	298	2.10	.75

Note: Religiosity, Sexism, Attitudes Toward Rape Victim Scale (ARVS), and Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS) range from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*); values range from 1 (*not like me at all*) to 6 (*very much like me*).

rape myths acceptance scales, indicating that participants, on average, did not endorse rape myths or hold negative attitudes toward women. Means were slightly below the midpoint for religiosity, benevolent, and hostile sexism, indicating a somewhat nonreligious and nonsexist student sample. Furthermore, the sample seemed to endorse values of self-transcendence and openness to change the most, and conservation the least, a profile that is expected of university students in general.

Multiple Regression

A three-step forward hierarchical multiple regression was used to investigate whether values (Step 1), religion (Christians/Muslims), and gender (Step 2), or sexism, religiosity, and attitudes toward rape victims (Step 3) would significantly predict rape myths acceptance in a sample of 300 undergraduate students. Assumptions of multivariate normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were met.¹ Five of the predictors contributed significantly to the prediction of RMAS, explaining 69% of the variance: the values of self-transcendence and conservation, gender, attitudes toward rape victims, and hostile sexism, with $R = .83$, $F(5, 260) = 114.88$, $p < .05$.

Table 2 displays the zero order correlation between RMAS and the predictors, and the multiple regression parameters predicting rape myths (R , R^2 , the unstandardized regression coefficients [B], the standardized regression coefficients [β], and the semipartial correlations [sr^2]).

Table 2
Pearson's Correlation and Multiple Regression Parameters of RMAS

Variable	RMAS (<i>r</i>)	<i>B</i>	β	sr_i^2	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Self-transcendence	-.13	-.05	-.04	.02	.13	.02
Conservation	.10	.07	.07	.03	.20	.04
Gender	.28	.08	.04	.07	.34	.11
ARVS	.82	.81	.75	.57	.83	.68
Hostile sexism	.52	.09	.10	.01	.83	.69
Self-enhancement	.10					
Benevolent sexism	.30					
Religiosity	.22					

Note: RMAS = Rape Myths Acceptance Scale; ARVS = Attitudes Toward Rape Victim Scale.

Participants endorsing values of conservation (e.g., tradition, conformity) were more likely to display rape myths attitudes, whereas those endorsing values of self-transcendence (e.g., benevolence, universalism) were less inclined to do so. These findings are in line with research across cultures, indicating that more egalitarian views and self-other orientation are likely to be associated with prejudicial attitudes to rape victims and myths. Gender differences also emerged in the predictable pattern, with male participants endorsing rape myths to a significantly higher degree than female participants. Hostile sexism, but not benevolent sexism, emerged as a strong predictor of RMAS, whereas religiosity and religion did not explain RMAS variance. The strongest predictor of RMAS is the attitudes toward rape victims. Although this finding is not surprising, the very high regression coefficients point to possible high conceptual and operational cofound between the RMAS and ARVS.

Scenarios and Victim's Characteristics

To investigate differences in rape perceptions based on type of relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, a single factor analysis of covariance was used with stranger, date, married, and neighbor type rape acting as repeated factors, and overall scale mean as covariate. The latter was used to control for response and presentation bias, as participants' own overall responses provide a standardization of scores as suggested by Schwartz (1992, 1994; Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). The means and the standard deviations of the scenarios are presented in Table 3. Mauchly's test of sphericity being significant, $\chi^2(5) = .52, p < .01$, the Greenhouse-Geisser

Table 3
Means and Standard Deviations of Scenarios

Scenario	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Strangers	1.34	.71
Neighbors	1.39	.78
Dating	1.63	.98
Married	2.56	1.58
Devout woman	2.24	1.35
Divorced woman	2.34	1.36
Married woman	2.39	1.47
Promiscuous woman	3.03	1.69
Chaste woman	2.20	1.27

Note: The lower the mean, the more the incident was described as rape.

estimate was used and yielded $F_{\text{within}}(2, 457) = 182.83, p < .05$, indicating a general main effect for type of rape on perceptions of rape. Pairwise comparison indicate that the “married” relationship was less perceived as rape than any of the other three types of relationships, and date rape was perceived less as rape than both neighbor and scenarios rape. Lebanese participants seem to differentiate between the presence versus absence of an intimate relationship as a primary indicator of rape, rather than evaluate the act itself regardless of the context in which it occurs.

An analysis of variance was conducted on the repeated factor of victim’s characteristics: chaste, devout, married, divorced, and promiscuous. Mauchly’s test of sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(9) = .80, p < .05$, and the Greenhouse-Geisser estimate indicated an overall main effect for victim characteristics, with $F_{\text{within}}(4, 921) = 35.09, p < .05$. Although claims of rape were usually believed regardless of the victim’s characteristics (all averages are below the midpoint), pairwise comparison indicate that only the promiscuous characteristic was significantly different from all other victim characteristics, with the promiscuous woman less likely to be believed than the other claimants.

Discussion

To our knowledge, this is the first study to quantitatively investigate attitudes toward rape, rape myths and sexism in a sample from the Arab

Middle East. Furthermore, the study explored the relationship between values, religion, religiosity, and gender on attitudes toward rape and investigated differences in perceptions when the type of rape and the victim's characteristics were made to vary.

Results indicated that the more participants endorsed conservation values (conformity, tradition, security) and the less they endorsed self-transcendence values (benevolence and universalism), the more likely they were to endorse rape myths. Although these results are in line with findings in the literature, they provide a first validation in an Arab nation.

Although religion and religiosity are often speculated to correlate with rape myths, this study did not find corroborating evidence. There were no differences between Christians and Muslims in endorsement of rape myths. Even though religiosity was found to be positively correlated with rape myths, it did not emerge as a significant predictor. It is possible that the subculture of the AUB student population or peculiarities of the Lebanese culture make religious differences less salient. However, we speculate that cultural influences and norms may have stronger influences on what is perceived as rape compared to religious influences and differences.

The strongest predictor of rape myths was attitudes toward rape victims. Participants who held negative evaluations of rape victims also tend to hold more rape myths. Both the RMAS and the ARVS measure constructs related to rape and may suffer from some conceptual overlap. The ARVS evaluates positive and negative attitudes toward victims and considers responsibility, integrity, deserving, denigration, and underestimation of the graveness of the assault (Ward, 1988). The RMAS also includes evaluations of rape victims because it measures, among other things, false beliefs pertaining to these victims (Burt, 1980). Thus, there are subsets in the "rape myth acceptance scale" that directly tackle the construct measured by the "attitudes toward victim scale," and as such may inflate correlation factors. Even though redundant items were controlled for in this study, the two measures seem to remain somewhat theoretically confounded. However, this does not undermine the value of the ARVS in predicting the RMAS, as Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) argued, as the importance of investigating attitudes toward victim of rape lies in its practical implication for developing intervention: A decrease in rape myths endorsement could be related to less negative attitudes toward the victims but more negative attitudes toward rape and its performer. This may lead to more empathy, trust, caring, and support for victims of rape, and thus lead to better healing processes.

Unsurprisingly, hostile sexism emerged as the second strongest predictor of rape myths. However, benevolent sexism, though correlated with rape myth, failed to emerge as a significant predictor. It is possible that participants high on benevolent sexism will endorse rape myths if the victim is perceived to be acting outside prescribed gender roles (Abrams et al., 2003; Viki & Abrams, 2002). Researchers have already noted that current psychometric tools (such as the ARVS and RMAS) do not differentiate between types of rape and victim characteristics (Abrams et al., 2003). People may thus think of different types of rape when responding to the scales (Payne et al., as cited in Abrams et al., 2003) and thus respond in undifferentiated ways when primed with rape measures. Future research may need to develop multidimensional rape measures that take both the type of rape (stranger, married, etc.) as well as the victim's characteristics (widowed, married, etc.) into account. Such measures would provide more sensitive and culturally differentiating tools of attitudes toward women and rape.

This research provides further support for the need to differentiate between type of rape and victim characteristics in affecting rape myths. Participants in this study identified all types of rape as rape, but to varying degrees of severity. Rape that occurs between married people is less considered as rape when compared to rape that occurs in other relations. Moreover, date rape was less considered as rape when compared to rape that occurs between strangers or neighbors. It is possible that Lebanese participants were differentiating between relationships that include sexual intent (married, date) from those that did not (stranger, neighbors), and as such were reflecting what is perceived appropriate within their cultural milieu.

Furthermore, participants were inclined to believe all rape claims as valid regardless of the victim's characteristics (married, chaste, divorced, devout, and promiscuous). This contrasts with Wehbi's (2002, 2003) proposition that perceptions of rape in the Lebanese context are dependent on virginity and marriagability. Rather, participants differentiated between promiscuity and nonpromiscuity in their evaluation of the credibility of the claims made. This finding is in line with research investigating sex-role stereotyping, which links conservative gender role ideologies with greater acceptance of rape myths (Anderson et al., 1997), and more blame on the victim (Simonson & Subich, 1999). Because promiscuity may be considered an inappropriate behavior for women in this honor society, participant responses were found to differentiate between promiscuous versus nonpromiscuous victim characteristics.

Both sets of findings (type of rape and victim characteristics) hold important implication for pedagogical and therapeutic intervention. Rape

victims in honor societies have a double burden to carry: the trauma of the aggression and the added self-blame, disparagement, and guilt that affect them in these guilt/shame-oriented cultures. It is important to highlight that rape is a severe act of aggression with equally severe psychological damage and that the intensity of the consequences does not change with the characteristics of the victim. Therapists may also need to be sensitive to the cultural norms and sanctions associated with rape, especially to vulnerable populations (Idisis, Ben-David, & Ben-Nachum, 2007; Moor, 2007).

It is important to note that this study is but a first exploration of attitudes toward rape in a Lebanese context. It would be important to pursue the identification of other significant predictors of rape myths attitudes and identify factors likely to foster them. Gender roles, right-wing authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1988), social dominance orientation (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), or socioeconomic status may play important roles. Furthermore it may also be important to use rape myths scales that differentiate between various types of rape as well as various victim characteristics. These may help identify culturally specific patterns as well as point to especially vulnerable populations, especially if similar surveys are conducted on wider more representative samples of the population.

Note

1. Two participants were deleted for missing data exceeding 30%; one item from the Hostile Sexism scale was deleted for structural misfit and a detrimental effect on alpha coefficients.

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