

AN EXAMINATION OF STUDENTS' PERSONAL INERATIONS AND RAPE
PERCEPTIONS

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AN EXAMINATION OF STUDENTS' PERSONAL INTERACTIONS AND RAPE
PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

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Social learning theory states that social behavior of any type is learned primarily by observing and imitating actions of others. Burgess and Akers (1966) developed social learning theory to explain deviancy by combining the variables that encouraged delinquency (e.g., social pressure from delinquent peers) with variables that discouraged delinquency (e.g., the parental response to delinquency in children). This study aims to measure reported levels of peer pressure and exposure to past and recent violence and use the results to analyze levels of rape myth acceptance. The primary research question posed in this research is: What is the relationship between peer pressure, exposure to past or recent violence, and rape myth acceptance? A survey consisting of 91 questions was emailed to 500 male college students. Overall, it was found that those who report higher

exposure to peer pressure will have higher reported levels of rape myth acceptance when compared to those who have not been exposed to high levels of peer pressure.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines rape as “the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with anybody part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim” and reports that 84,767 forcible rapes were reported to law enforcement in 2010 (FBI, 2012). This definition was updated to include male victims as well. The rate of forcible rapes in 2010 was estimated at 54.2 per 100,000 female inhabitants (FBI, 2010). However, these figures greatly underestimate the true scope of rape because these numbers are only based on what is reported to the police (Koss, Gidycz & Wisniewski, 1987). It has been estimated that only 10 to 50% of rapes that actually occur are ever reported to authorities (Koss, 1985). Rape is one of the least reported of all violent crimes in the United States and Canada (Robin, 1977). Tjaden and Thoennes (2006) analyzed results from the National Violence against Women Survey and found only 19.1% of women reported the crime.

The victimization rate for women peaks in the 16 to 19-year old age group, and the second highest rate occurs in the 20-24-year old age group (Koss et al., 1987). Three theoretical models attempt to explain how women become rape victims:

The victim model suggests that vulnerability to rape can be increased unknowingly by specific behaviors or personality characteristics of a woman such

as passivity, over-submissiveness, or insensitivity to social nuance. The social control model states that women are socialized through sex role training to accept rape-supportive beliefs and attitudes which may increase the likelihood of sexual assault and finally, the situational blame model suggests that sexual assault is made more likely by certain environmental or structural circumstances surrounding the assault, such as victim response strategies (Koss, 1985:193-194).

The victim precipitation model was proposed by Amir (1971), who based his views on the observation that some police reports on rape noted that the victim had a bad reputation in the neighborhood. Selkin (1978) studied rape victims and found victim's likelihood of being raped, had been increased by their personality characteristics, including greater passivity and lesser poise in social situations. Research has shown that women are more likely to be viewed as stereotypical rape victims if they are perceived as having done nothing to deserve the assault, if they are seen as chaste and respectable, if they resist their assailant, and report the incident immediately (Cook, David, and Grant 2001; Dumont, Miller and Myhr 2003; Kelly, 2002 Stewart, Dobbins, and Gatowski 1996). The social control model of victimization has been explored by Burt (1980). However, to date no study has examined the attitudes held by women who have been raped. Therefore, the hypothesis that rape victims conform to an extremely rape-supportive belief system which renders them uniquely vulnerable to rape remains untested (Koss, 1985).

Muehlenhard, Friedman, and Thomas (1985) found that men and women are likely to misinterpret each other's behavior. The misinterpretation of behavior could lead to serious consequences. The man may feel that the woman led him on which in turn

could lead to sexual aggression or rape against the woman (Muehlenhard et al., 1985). It is customary for men to ask for and pay for the date (Morr Serewicz & Gale, 2008). Mongeau and Carey (1996) found men to have heightened sexual expectations on first dates when the woman initiated it.

Social learning theory is a perspective that states individuals learn within a social context. It is facilitated through concepts such as modeling and observational learning (Ormrod, 1999). Social learning theory states that social behavior of any type is learned primarily by observing and imitating actions of others.

Burgess and Akers (1966) developed social learning theory to explain deviancy by combining the variables that encouraged delinquency (e.g., social pressure from delinquent peers) with variables that discouraged delinquency (e.g., the parental response to delinquency in children). Sutherland's (1947) model for learning in a social environment depends on the cultural conflict between different factors in a society and over who determines what is deviant. Social learning may have a part in students' rape myth acceptance attitudes. This thesis examines the factors within social learning theory that may lead to sexual aggression by examining and testing peer pressure and exposure to violence levels.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Different definitions of aggression produce different theories and research findings (Bandura, 1978). Learning favorable versus unfavorable definitions has been described as a process where individuals attempt to balance pro-criminal definitions against prosocial or conforming definitions (Akers & Jennings, 2002). When applied to the family, social learning theory states that we model behavior that we have been exposed to as children (Mihalic & Elliot, 1997). Therefore, children who grow up in families in which they witness interparental violence or experience sexual abuse are more likely to imitate or tolerate these behaviors than are children from nonviolent homes (Stith, Rosen, Middleton, Busch, Lundeberg & Carlton, 2000).

Theoretical Foundation

Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura (1978) explains the process of learning that occurs within a social context. The process of social learning theory consists of instrumental learning that occurs either directly through rewards and punishments for behavior, or through imitation or observation of the behavior and the consequences that the behavior has for others (Krohn, 1999). Aggression is hypothesized to have many multiple predictors and social

learning theory explains how the aggressive behavior starts (Jennings, Park, Tomsich, Gover, & Akers, 2011).

Burgess and Akers (1966) differential association reinforcement theory combined key components from Sutherland's (1947) sociological approach in his differential association theory and the principles of behavioral psychology (Akers & Jennings, 2002). This was the foundation for Akers "social learning theory" (Akers & Jennings, 2002). In Sutherland's theory, an individual learns two types of definitions towards carrying out a particular behavior. The individual can learn favorable definitions that could possibly increase the probability that he will act out the behavior, or he can learn unfavorable definitions that could possibly decrease the probability that he would engage in the particular behavior (Sutherland, 1947). Sutherland's theory became vulnerable to criticism because it was not tested in a direct way within the sociological and criminological literature in the years after its emergence (Akers & Jennings, 2002). Sutherland was never able to test the theory directly or find empirical support for the theory (Burgess & Akers, 1966). Burgess and Akers (1966) constructed their social learning theory by integrating Sutherland's concepts of differential association and definitions with the concepts from behavioral theory of reinforcement and imitation (Krohn, 1999). Burgess and Akers (1966) developed seven principles that illustrated the social learning process:

1. Criminal behavior is learned according to the principles of operant conditioning.
2. Criminal behavior is learned both in nonsocial situations that are reinforcing or discriminative and through that social interaction in

which the behavior of other persons is reinforcing or discriminative for criminal behavior.

3. The principal part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs in those groups which comprise the individual's major source of reinforcements.
4. The learning of criminal behavior, including specific techniques, attitudes, and avoidance procedures, is a function of the effective and available reinforcers, and the existing reinforcement contingencies.
5. The specific class of behaviors which are learned and their frequency of occurrence are a function of the reinforcers which are effective and available, and the rules or norms by which these reinforcers are applied.
6. Criminal behavior is a function of norms which are discriminative for criminal behavior, the learning of which takes place when such behavior is more highly reinforced than noncriminal behavior.
7. The strength of criminal behavior is a direct function of the amount, frequency, and probability of its reinforcement (Akers & Jennings, 2002: 324).

The differential association component in Burgess and Akers' (1966) social learning theory is of primary importance to the theory's ability to explain the process of how learning occurs. The individual with whom a person chooses to differentially associate and interact with (either directly or indirectly) has a fundamental part in providing the context where social learning occurs (Akers & Jennings, 2002). Behavior is

strengthened through reward (positive reinforcement) and avoidance of punishment (negative reinforcement) or it is weakened by aversive stimuli (positive punishment) and loss of reward (negative punishment) (Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce, & Radosevich, 1979). Whether deviant or conforming behavior continues depends on past and present rewards and punishments (Akers et al., 1979).

The assumption of criminal behavior in this theory is that it is learned by the same processes and mechanisms as conforming behavior (Burgess & Akers, 1966). Additionally, people learn definitions (attitudes and orientations) through interaction with significant groups in their lives (Akers et al., 1979). Role models, or those with high status, competence, or proximity, are targets for observational learning (Akers & Jennings, 2009). Behavior, whether it is deviant or conforming, can be expected to the extent that it has been differentially reinforced and it has become desirable or justified (Akers et al., 1979). Akers (1985) also stated behaviors must be learned and imitated through four mechanisms: (1) incorporation of criminal definitions; (2) differential effects of reinforcement for criminal v. conforming behaviors; (3) peer associations; and (4) stimulus discrimination. Individuals can also learn by observing the behavior of others and the outcomes of those behaviors. Learning can occur without a change in behavior. Behaviorists indicate that learning has to correspond to a change in behavior; in contrast social learning theorists stated that people can learn through observation alone, their learning may not be necessarily shown in their performance. Learning may or may not produce a behavior change (Ormond, 1999).

If parents and peers are main sources of reinforcement for juveniles and if the behavior displayed by these persons tends to conform to general social norms, the

likelihood of similar behavior by the juvenile should increase (Conger, 1976). On average, juveniles become more delinquent from early to middle adolescence and tend to become less delinquent from ages 16 to 17 years onwards (Duncan, Duncan & Strycker, 2000; Landsheer & Van Dijkum, 2005). Allyn and Azrin (1966) and Burgess and Akers (1966) also stated if the reward value of deviant activities is greater than conventional activities, then the rate of deviant behavior will increase.

Social Learning Theory and Sexual Aggression

Social learning theory has been relied upon to explain aggression across generations (Lichter & McCloskey 2004). The study of violence and aggression against partners began in the 1970s with studies of spousal abuse, particularly physical aggression (Sellers, Cochran, & Branch, 2005). Aggression is defined as behavior that results in personal injury and physical destruction (Bandura, 1978). Modeling and reinforcement operate jointly in the social learning of aggression in everyday life. Styles of aggression are largely learned through observation, and refined through reinforced practice (Bandura, 1978).

One part of social learning theory, sex-role theory, suggests that early sex-role socialization can teach boys to be the dominant partner, the major wage earner, head of the household, and to maintain power and control (Mihalic & Elliot, 1997). Women are not supposed to show their sexual interest, and men are supposed to show their sexual interest, and it is not necessary to control their urges if they are dating or married (Frese, Moya & Megias 2004). Such men can hold their sexual needs high above anything else and view women as constantly being sexually receptive (Polaschek & Gannon 2004).

Giacopassi & Dull (1986) conducted a study that included 449 students from a major urban university in the mid-South who completed a questionnaire that sought to measure the degree of acceptance and rejection of statements that reflected prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, or rapists. This questionnaire included statements, such as: "Rape is usually an unplanned impulsive act", and "One of the most common types of rape is that of a black man against a white woman". The findings indicated that a substantial amount of respondents (between 17% and 75%) strongly or moderately agreed with statements that reflect stereotypical concerns. It is possible for many men to hold liberal attitudes towards women and act out deviant behavior or fail to understand how their behavior is perceived and experienced (Harmon, Owens & Dewey, 1995).

It is important to understand the factors that can correlate with sexual aggression. Malamuth (1986) lists these factors as those creating the motivation to commit the act and those reducing internal and external inhibitions that might prevent the aggression from being carried out. The factors assessed in Malamuth's (1986) study were sexual arousal in response to aggression, dominance as a motive for sexual acts, hostility toward women, attitudes accepting of violence against women, psychoticism, and sexual experience. Nearly all the predictor factors had a significant role in sexual aggression; there was also a much better prediction of sexual aggression using a combination of these factors than by using them individually (Malamuth, 1986). Peer pressure to obtain sexual satisfaction from women, even by force was considered a second type of motivation for sexual aggression (Heilbrun & Loftus, 1986). Frustration appears to be a quality of sexually aggressive behavior by deviant males who are more sexually experienced. These

men are more persistent in seeking additional sexual encounters (Kanin, 1967). It was also noted that these aggressive men had friends of the same sex who encouraged the attainment of sexual experience (Kanin, 1967). Researchers in personality and social psychology have proposed that rape myth acceptance may facilitate sexual aggression at the individual level (Boehner, Siebler & Schmelcher, 2006).

Rape Myth Acceptance

Research that has focused on existing attitudes has consistently shown that male subjects are more accepting of violence against women and more accepting of rape myths than females (Barnett & Field, 1977). The complexity of rape myth acceptance is apparent in college students, who likely received exposure to rape prevention education by the time they graduated high school and therefore may have more awareness that certain rape myths are not socially acceptable (McMahon, 2010). Rape myth research has found that individuals' acceptance of rape myths and rape supportive attitudes is correlated with increased sex role stereotyping, stronger adherence to adversarial sexual beliefs, and greater acceptance of interpersonal violence within relationships (Burt, 1980). A study of undetected, self-reported acquaintance rapists, found that individuals propensity to rape (to engage in sexually assaultive, abusive, or coercive behavior in order to procure sexual intercourse) was significantly related to the degree to which they subscribed to several rape supportive attitudes (e.g., acceptance of rape myths, adherence to traditional views of female/male sexuality, perception of sexual aggression as normal (Koss, Leonard, Beezly & Oros, 1985). Subjects for Koss et al. (1985) were chosen based on their responses to a sexual experience survey that was administered to 1,846 males in university classes within a state university of 20,000 students. Koss et al. (1985) found

results that supported a social control/social conflict explanation of nonstranger sexual aggression. The more sexually aggressive a man had been, the more likely he was to attribute adversarial qualities to interpersonal relationships, accept sex-role stereotypes, and to believe myths about rape (Koss et al. 1985). Briere and Malamuth (1983) tested 352 male students from the University of Manitoba using a voluntary survey. Of the 352 students tested, 99 (28%) showed a likelihood of both raping and using force.

Researchers have emphasized the significant role of rape myth acceptance (RMA) in individuals' predisposition to engage in sexually aggressive behavior, including rape (Hinck & Thomas, 1999). Rape myths are 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). Not surprisingly, the attitudes most frequently examined in relation to RMA are those concerning women and their social roles (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). These negative attitudes towards women seen in RMA are an important aspect to this study because social learning from family and peers and exposure to violence could be factor in why some men agree with these attitudes.

Acceptance of sex-role stereotyping (traditional or non-traditional) has impacted how date rape is perceived. Collar and Resick (1987) found that women in their high sex-role stereotyping groups blamed the victim more for her victimization, felt the victim gave the perpetrator the wrong idea, and gave the victim more responsibility for her situation than did women in the low sex-role stereotyping groups. Check and Malamuth (1983) surveyed 289 male and female introductory psychology students from the

University of Manitoba. Their analyses revealed that sex role stereotyping was positively correlated (all p 's < .001) with rape myth acceptance ($r = .54$). Muehlenhard (1988) conducted a study using 272 females and 268 male students from a university. In his study, rape was rated as somewhat justifiable by 29.7% of the persons with traditional attitudes and 14.7% from nontraditional persons. When analyzed by sex, rape was rated as somewhat justifiable by 32.8% of the traditional men, 24.0% of traditional women, 16.5% of nontraditional men and 13.9% of nontraditional women (Muehlenhard, 1988). A positive correlation was found in both studies between sex-typed orientation (traditional or liberal) and acceptance of rape myths (Check & Malamuth, 1983; Muehlenhard, 1988).

Rape justifiability is decided by power factors in a dating situation, such as who pays for the date, where the couple goes, and who initiates the dates (Hinck & Thomas, 1999). Holcomb, Holcomb, Sondag, and Williams (1991), found results that were similar to studies done by Bostwick and Delucia (1992) and Muehlenard (1988),- sexually aggressive males and males who agreed with rape myths were less likely to perceive certain scenarios as rape, blamed the victims, perceived victims as desiring intercourse, and viewed the assailants' behavior as less violent. Holcomb et al. (1991) found in their sample of 407 males that one in four male subjects agreed: rape is provoked by the victim; any woman could prevent rape if she tried hard enough, and women cry rape frequently and falsely. Muehlenard (1988) found among a sample of 272 female and 268 male students that sex-willingness and rape-justifiability ratings were highest when the woman initiated the date. Bostwick and Delucia (1992) had 458 participants indicate rape justifiability. They found that female sex-willingness was highest when the woman asked

and/or paid for the date among male participants. Unwanted sexual intercourse was rated as justifiable among 268 male undergraduate students if the couple went to the man's apartment, if the woman asked the man out, and if the man paid for all dating expenses (Muehlenhard et al., 1985). Muehlenhard and Linton (1987) also had 294 male college subjects agree that raping a woman is justifiable if the woman was perceived as being a tease or "loose." Additionally, negative and stereotypical attitudes toward women have been found to be associated with rape myth acceptance (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

In a study conducted by Vandiver and Dupalo (2012) 585 surveys were collected from students from a large public university in the Southwestern United States. The majority of the students did not agree with rape myths, which suggests that people's views may have changed considerably (Vandiver & Dupalo, 2012). Their study also showed male college students were more likely than their female counterparts to support rape myths (Vandiver & Dupalo, 2012).

Family and Peer Factors

Family

Psychologists have focused on two sources of social influence on adolescents' propensity for misconduct: family and peers (Chen, Greenberger, Lester, Dong, & Guo, 1998). Family violence is one of the most consistent predictors of relationship violence among adults (Stith et al., 2000; Kalmuss, 1984). Children from families with patterns of reciprocal negative behavior are more likely to associate with deviant and antisocial peers, which in turn lead to delinquent behaviors (Chen et al., 1998). Children who

witness violence between their parents are more likely to show aggression (Holden & Ritchie, 1991).

Family violence is one of the most consistent predictors of relationship violence among adults (Stith et al., 2000). An association between childhood exposure to marital violence and dating violence among adolescents and young adults has been found (Gwartney-Gibbs, Stockard, & Bohmer, 1987; Foshee, Bauman, & Linder, 1999; Reitzel-Jaffee & Wolfe, 2001). However, Simons, Lin and Gordon (1998) found that exposure to corporal punishment increased the risk of dating violence, but being exposed to interparental aggression was unrelated to young men's self report of dating violence.

Observations of how parents and significant others behave in intimate relationships during childhood and adolescence provide an initial learning of behavioral alternatives which are "appropriate" for these relationships. If the child's family of origin coped with stress and frustration with anger and aggression, the child is at a greater risk for displaying those same behaviors, either witnessed or experienced, as an adult (Mihalic & Elliot, 1997). A key element of social learning theory concerns its generalizability (Mihalic & Elliot, 1997). Kalmuss (1984) explored the relationship between childhood family aggressions (by children who directly experienced violence and by those who only witnessed it in their families) and severe marital aggression using data from a representative sample of 2,143 adults. The results indicated that observing physical violence between one's parents is related to involvement in severe marital aggression more than is being hit as teenager by one's parents. The modeling of marital aggression did not appear to be sex specific. Kalmuss's (1984) results suggested that the transmission of family aggression across generations tends to be gender specific.

Lichter and McCloskey (2004) used a longitudinal design with mother-child pairs from violent and non-violent homes. Participants were interviewed about exposure to marital violence twice over a nine-year period. Respondents were asked questions about adolescent gender typed beliefs, acceptance of dating violence, and experiences with dating violence. Results from the study indicated that adolescents who were exposed to marital violence during their childhood were more likely to justify dating violence in their own relationships.

Peer Pressure among Adolescents

A higher propensity to commit rape or to use sexual force is associated with perceived rewards for the act of rape itself and perceptions of peer support and acceptance (Margolis 1998). Respondents in Lev-Wiesel's (2004) study felt that boys may be propelled to rape in order to remain part of their peer group and be socially accepted. Peer pressure by same-sex peers has been known to influence men's attitudes towards sex (Elias & Gebhard, 1969). This implicates the values of masculinity as a critical factor (Heilbrun & Loftus, 1986).

If deviant peers represent positive gratification for the individual, than the person will learn to value behaviors that are endorsed by the group (Kaplan, Johnson, & Bailey, 1987). The individuals may engage in deviant behavior in order to evoke positive feelings and responses from his peer group (Kaplan et al., 1987). Delinquency is caused by a weakening of social controls once exhibited; its effects are to increase associations with delinquent peers (Thornberry, Lizotte, Krohn, Farnworth, & Jang, 1994). Individuals are

more likely to accept or engage in aggressive behavior when they have frequent and close contact with others who accept and/or engage in such behavior (Gwartney-Gibbs et al. 1987).

In Gwartney-Gibbs et al's., (1987) study, females with a sexually aggressive peer group showed rates of sustaining abuse and violence 20% more than those without such a peer group. Additionally, 70% of females with female friends who were sexually victimized also suffered accounts of sexual aggression. The influence of peers on the male subjects in the Gwartney-Gibbs et al., (1987) study was only significantly associated with sustaining sexual aggression, not abuse or violence. An analysis done by Brown, Clasen, and Eicher (1986) found adolescent peers have more influence over teenagers' involvement in misconduct than over their participation in pro social activities. Over time, the individual's associate with delinquent peers, the more likely they will be reinforced to engage in delinquent activity and the more delinquent behavior is engaged in, the individual are more prone to associate with delinquent peers (Thornberry et al., 1994).

College Fraternities

Boeringer, Shehan, and Akers (1991) suggest that sexual aggression is learned in settings, such as fraternities, and is not part of predispositions or pre-existing attitudes. Some have argued that fraternities are places where rape is more likely to occur (Martin & Hummer, 1989). Students most likely to accept rape myths and be more sexually aggressive are more likely to live in fraternities and sororities, consume high amounts of alcohol and drugs, and place a higher value on social life at college (Gwartney-Gibbs & Stockard, 1989).

Explanations of sexual aggression on college campuses have emphasized the critical role of traditional socialization practices and their effects upon attitudes toward sex (Heilbrun & Loftus, 1986). Sexually aggressive men generally hold stereotypical beliefs about the role of women (Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987). Sanday (1990) found that most fraternity men wish to socially and sexually dominate women and fraternity men bond together in part to achieve the domination to which they believe all men are entitled. A moderate relation between fraternity membership and sexual aggression was found in a study by Garrett-Gooding and Senter (1987).

In a qualitative analysis done by Martin and Hummer (1989), evidence was found to support the belief that peer influence in the fraternity environment is extremely conducive to sexual victimization through nonphysical coercion, and provision of intoxicants. Boeringer (1996) found that fraternity members were more likely to have friends who had intentionally gotten women drunk to have sex, and who did not disapprove of this practice. Overall, there is substantive and pervasive evidence that fraternities have been associated with reinforcement and the creation of attitudes that are in line with sexual aggression (Murnen & Kohlman, 2007).

Male Peer- Support Theory

Male peer-support theory stresses the influences of patriarchy within intimate male-female relationships, especially when the male partner perceives his authority has been challenged (Sellers et al., 2005). If a male feels that his authority has been

challenged (i.e., his partner denies him, argues with him, nags or berates him, or threatens to end the relationship, etc.) it leaves him feeling stressed and seeking support from his male peers, often from within all- male social groups, such as fraternities, athletic teams, or gangs (Sellers et al., 2005). Patriarchal values and norms run high within these groups. Physical aggression against female partners is often encouraged from male peers. Male peer-support theory has not received a large amount of empirical attention, and its theoretical scope is quite limited. This theory is specifically designed to explain male-to-female partner violence. It does not take into consideration female-to-male or same-sex partner violence (Sellers et al., 2005).

A large body of quantitative and qualitative research shows that male peer support is a powerful determinant to men's actions. It was found that rural Ohio men relied on their male friends and neighbors, including police officers, to support a violent patriarchal status (DeKeseredy, Donnermeyer, Schwartz, Tunnell, & Hall, 2007). Three methods stood out in male peer support: frequently drinking with male friends, informational support, and attachment to abusive peers. Male abusers who received male peer support were also more likely to view pornography and adhere to the ideology of familial patriarchy (DeKeseredy et al., 2007).

Schwartz, DeKeseredy, Tait, and Alvi (2001) tested three hypotheses. The first hypothesis was that the more men and women drink with their dating partners, the more likely they are to report being sexually abused or to report being a sexual aggressor. The second hypothesis was that the more men and women use recreational drugs and the more they use them with their dating partners, the more likely they are to report being sexually abused or report being a sexual aggressor. The third hypothesis was that men who have

male peers who explicitly tell them to assault women, both physically and emotionally under certain conditions, are more likely to report being sexually abusive. The authors found that the data they collected for the first hypothesis fit the argument that men who drink more heavily are more likely to be motivated to offend against women and women who drink more are more likely to become targets. The second hypothesis had minimal support in the data collected. There were no significant findings to report. The third hypothesis was supported with the data collected. Male students who received advice from male peers were more likely to engage in sexually abusive behavior.

Summary of Literature

Social learning theory consists primarily of instrumental learning that occurs either directly through rewards and punishments for behavior, or vicariously by imitation or the observation of the behavior and the consequences that the behavior has for others (Krohn, 1999). Even the behavior that is modeled in front of children can have a lasting effect as they grow older. The children may repeat these behaviors and actions as they grow older (Mihalic & Elliot, 1997). When social learning theory is applied to the sex role theory it suggests that early sex-role socialization can teach boys to be the dominant partner (Mihalic & Elliot, 1997). In some cases, men will hang on to this idea and treat women as objects to satisfy their sexual needs (Polaschek & Gannon, 2004). Men who agree with these ideas might be more inclined to agree with rape myth acceptance and in some cases act out in sexually aggressive behavior, including rape (Hinck & Thomas, 1999).

Family and peers and even college fraternities can be influential in young men's lives. Children from families with negative characteristics and traits are more likely to display these same characteristics when they grow older as well as in their romantic relationships (Foshee, Bauman, & Linder, 1999; Gwartney-Gibbs et al., 1987; Reitzel-Jaffee & Wolfe, 2001;). Same sex peers have been known to greatly influence men's attitudes towards sex (Elias & Gebhard, 1969). Men who associate themselves with delinquent peers and receive positive gratification for their actions will begin to value these delinquent actions that are endorsed by the group (Kaplan et al., 1987). Martin and Hummer (1989) and Boeringer (1996) both found peer influence in fraternities is conducive to sexual

victimization. Evidence has shown that fraternities have been associated with reinforcement of sexual aggressive attitudes (Murnen & Kohlman, 2007).

The literature has shown that there is a correlation between peer pressure and rape myth acceptance, but what has not been shown is whether exposure to violence will also generate rape myth acceptance. The present research will test both peer pressure and exposures to past and recent violence levels and see if there are any correlation between them.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Prior literature suggests that various forms of peer pressure, such as family peer pressure and adolescent peer pressure can have an effect on men and their sexual aggression (Margolis, 1998; Lev-Wiesel, 2004; Sellers et al., 2005). Exposure to violence, such as family violence and dating violence, has been reported as having significant lasting effects on adult relationships when witnessed as an adolescent (Kalmuss, 1984; Lichter and McCloskey, 2004; Mihalic & Elliot, 1997). Furthermore, these two factors could have an effect on levels of rape myth acceptance among college students (Burt, 1980; Heilbrun & Loftus, 1986; Koss et al. 1985). There is not much research; however, that examines the relationship between peer pressure and exposure to violence on rape myth acceptance. Among the reasons for the lack of research is the difficulty of obtaining honest answers to questions that can be sensitive in nature for some people. This is known as social desirability bias, which refers to the tendency of research subjects to give socially desirable responses instead of choosing responses that are reflective of their true feelings (Grimm, 2010).

This study aims to measure reported levels of peer pressure and exposure to past and recent violence and use the results to analyze levels of rape myth acceptance. This chapter discusses the methods used to conduct this study, including identification of the

research questions, sample selection techniques, proposed key concepts, and the analysis plan.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The primary research question posted in this research is: **What is the relationship between peer pressure, exposure to past or recent violence, and rape myth acceptance?** This is important to assess because it will lead to an increased identification of the factors that are correlated with rape myth acceptance.

There are three hypotheses posed in this research. The first hypothesis proposes *those who report higher exposure to peer pressure will have higher reported levels of rape myth acceptance when compared to those who have not been exposed to high levels of peer pressure*. Prior research has shown that a higher propensity to commit rape or to use sexual force is associated with perceived rewards for the act of rape itself and improved perceptions of peer support and acceptance (Margolis, 1998). Thus, it is proposed the reward of social acceptance becomes a catalyst for accepting rape myths.

The second hypothesis is composed of two parts. The first part of the hypothesis proposes *those who report higher exposure to recent violence will have higher reported levels of rape myth acceptance when compared to those who have been exposed to lower levels of or no violence*. The second part of the hypothesis proposes *those who report higher exposure to past violence will have higher reported levels of rape myth acceptance when compared to those who have been exposed to lower levels of violence or no past violence*. This relationship has been shown in previous research, which showed a positive correlation between childhood exposure to marital violence and dating violence

among adolescents and young adults (Foshee, Bauman, & Linder, 1999; Gwartney-Gibbs, Stockard, & Bohmer, 1987; Reitzel-Jaffee & Wolfe, 2001).

The third hypothesis proposes that *those who report higher levels of peer pressure and exposure to past or recent violence will report higher levels of rape myth acceptance*. Although prior research has produced these findings, this research will provide further confirmation of the relationship by replicating it on a different sample. This is based on the previous two hypotheses. If exposure to peer pressure and past or recent violence will raise rape myth acceptance levels, then both of these variables will have the same result. These hypotheses will be analyzed using bivariate analyses. Although previous research has not found this particular relationship, the present research will add to the literature by testing the relationship among peer pressure, exposure to past or recent violence and rape myth acceptance.

Proposed Methods

This study involves administering surveys to male college students from a large public university in the Southwestern United States. Participants were recruited via email, and the survey was conducted via survey monkey. A total of 500 requests for participation were emailed out with an expected 20% response rate. An incentive was offered (i.e., gift cards distributed through a lottery drawing) to increase the response rate. IRB approval was obtained prior to soliciting participants. The student population of

the University is approximately 34,000 students as of Fall 2011. Of this population 14,863 are male students. The ethnic composition is predominately White, non-Hispanic which is 59% of the population, 28% Hispanic, 6% African Americans, .4% Native American, 2% Asian, and .1 % Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

Proposed Measurements of Key Concepts

The key concepts in this study, as identified in the hypotheses include reported exposure to recent and past violence, reported exposure to peer pressure, and rape myth acceptance levels. The concepts are conceptualized and operationalized as follows.

The concepts *reported exposure to recent violence and reported exposure to past violence* are measured in accordance with a previous scale developed by Singer, Anglin, Song, and Lunghofer (1995). The 22-item scale asked various questions—from recent exposure to physical violence and recent exposure to peer pressure. The scale measured five specific acts of past and recent violence: threats, slapping/hitting/punching, beating, knife attacks and shootings. Past exposure to physical violence was measured on a 10-item scale using a four-point Likert scale ranging from “never” (a score of 0) to “very often” (a score of 3). The same past and recent violent behaviors were employed (see questions 1 through 22 in Appendix A under Recent Violence Exposure and questions 1 through 10 under Past Violence Exposure). High levels of past and recent exposure will be measured by identifying the median value and designating the top 50th percentile as those who have high levels of exposure.

The concept *reported exposure to peer pressure* is measured in accordance with a previous scale developed by Santor, Messervey and Kusumakar (1999). The scale was measured on a six-point scale ranging from “absolutely sure” of nonconformity to “absolutely sure” of conformity (see questions 1 through 11 under Peer Pressure Items in Appendix A and questions 1 through 12 under Popularity Items in Appendix A). High levels of exposure to peer pressure will be measured by identifying the median value and using the top 50th percentile.

The concept *rape myth acceptance* is measured using the Bumby (1996) rape myth acceptance scales. It also drew on social psychological research on reactions to victims, since the hypothesized effect of rape myths is to deny or to dismiss perceived injury or to blame the victims for their own victimization. The rape scale was composed of 36 items and scored on a four-point Likert scale with 0 being the lowest and 4 being the highest (see questions 1 through 36 under Bumby in Appendix A).

The first concepts used in this study were reported *exposure to past violence* and *reported exposure to recent violence* and the second concept was *reported exposure to peer pressure*. These were the two independent variables. These three concepts varied by each subjects answer on the surveys. The dependant variable in this study was the third measured concept *rape myth acceptance*.

Analysis

To test the first hypothesis (*Those who report higher exposure to peer pressure will have higher reported levels of rape myth acceptance when compared to those who have not been exposed to high levels of peer pressure,*) a crosstab was employed. To test the second hypothesis (*Those who report higher recent exposure to violence will have higher reported levels of rape myth acceptance when compared to those who have been exposed to lower levels of or no violence*), a crosstab was employed. Likewise, to test hypothesis 2a: *those who report higher exposure to past violence will have higher reported levels of rape myth acceptance when compared to those who have been exposed to lower levels of violence or no past violence*) a crosstab was employed. To test the third (*Those who report higher levels of peer pressure and past or recent exposure to violence will report higher levels of rape myth acceptance*), a crosstab was employed. For each analysis, categorical data were used. Tests of significance, to determine if the relationship was applicable to the population, were employed. Given that categorical data were used, chi-square tests are relied upon.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The sample used in this study included 81 male college students between the ages of 18 and 34 (see Table 1). This made the final response rate 16.2%. They were all students at a southwestern college in Texas. The average age of the students was 20 years old. The students ranged from college freshmen to graduate level, with 33% of respondents being college seniors. Sixty-nine percent of respondents were Caucasian, 28% were Hispanic, 5% were African American.

Table 1 Demographics and Background Characteristics

	Frequency	Percentage
Race		
Caucasian	42	68.9%
Hispanic	17	27.9%
Year in College		
Seniors	20	32.8%
Juniors	13	21.3%
Sophomores	9	14.8%
Freshmen	10	16.4%
Graduate Students	9	14.8%
Age		
17-20	16	26.2%
21	11	18.0%
22+	34	55.7%

Bumby Rape Myth Scale Results

The possible total scores on the Bumby Rape Myth scale ranged from 36-180. The low number on the scale indicates a high rape myth acceptance score and the high number on the scale indicates a lower rape myth acceptance score. Those who scored in the top 50th percentile were defined as those who had high levels of rape myth. The scores of the 57 students ranged from 77 to 178. The average score for this measurement was 148 (standard deviation = 21), and the median was 153.

Exposure to Violence Scale Results

The possible total score range for the Past Exposure to Violence scale was 0 to 12; however, the actual scores reported ranged from zero to eight. The average score was 4.1, the median was 2.0 (standard deviation= 4.3). The possible score range for Recent Exposure to Violence was 0 to 22; however, the actual scores ranged from 0 to 16. The mean was 1.1, 75% of the participants reported no recent violence exposure (standard deviation= 1.9). High rates of exposure to past and recent violence were measured using those who scored in the top 50th percentile above the median.

Peer Pressure Scale Results

The possible score on the Peer Pressure scale ranged from 0 to 80. The low score on the scale indicates a high level of peer pressure and the high score indicates a low level of peer pressure. The mean was 74, the median was 74 (standard deviation= 13).

Hypothesis 1 Results

The first hypothesis proposed *those who report higher exposure to peer pressure will have higher reported levels of rape myth acceptance when compared to those who have not been exposed to high levels of peer pressure*. As shown in Table 2, the results showed students exposed to high levels of peer pressure were significantly more likely than those exposed to low levels of peer pressure to report higher levels of rape myth (66% compared to 35%; $\chi^2= 5.238$, $df= 1$, $p < .05$).

Table 2 Levels of Peer Pressure by Levels of Rape Myth

	Lower Levels of Peer Pressure Exposure		Higher levels of Peer Pressure Exposure	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Higher level of rape myth	9	35%	19	66%
Lower levels of rape myth acceptance	17	65%	10	35%

Hypothesis 2 Results

The second hypothesis proposed that *those who report higher recent exposure to violence will have higher reported levels of rape myth acceptance when compared to those who have been exposed to lower levels of or no violence*. A crosstab was employed

to examine this question (see Table 3). The results showed no significant difference between students exposed to low and high levels of recent violence exposure (46% compared to 50%; $\chi^2 = .080$, $df = 1$, $p > .05$).

Table 3 Recent Exposure to Violence by Levels of Rape Myth

	Lower Levels of Recent Violence Exposure		Higher levels of Recent Violence Exposure	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Higher level of rape myth	11	50%	11	46%
Lower levels of rape myth acceptance	11	50%	13	54%

Hypothesis 2a Results

The second hypothesis proposed that *those who report higher exposure to past violence will have higher reported levels of rape myth acceptance when compared to those who have been exposed to lower levels of violence or no past violence*. A crosstab was employed to examine this question (see Table 4). The results showed no significant difference between students exposed to lower levels of violence or no past violence (43% compared to 54%; $\chi^2 = .080$, $df = 1$, $p > .05$).

Table 4 Past Exposure to Violence by Levels of Rape Myth

	Lower Levels of Past Violence Exposure		Higher levels of Recent Violence Exposure	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Higher level of rape myth	15	54%	9	43%
Lower levels of rape myth acceptance	13	46%	12	57%

Hypothesis 3 Results

The third hypothesis proposed that *those who report higher levels of peer pressure and past or recent exposure to violence will report higher levels of rape myth acceptance*. A crosstab was employed to examine this question. The results showed no significant difference but within the sample the difference was large. (46% compared to 56% $\chi^2=.143$, $df= 1$, $p > .05$).

**Table 5 Levels of Peer Pressure and Past and Recent Violence Exposure
by Levels of Rape Myth**

	Lower Levels of Past Violence Exposure and Peer Pressure		Higher levels of Past Violence Exposure and Peer Pressure	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Higher level of rape myth	19	46%	9	56%
Lower levels of rape myth acceptance	22	54%	7	44%

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The overall purpose of this research was to test both peer pressure and exposures to violence levels and see if there was any correlation between these factors with rape myth acceptance. The study measured reported levels of past and recent violence exposure and peer pressure and analyzed the results to levels of rape myth acceptance.

Existing literature has shown that there is a correlation between peer pressure and rape myth acceptance (Margolis, 1998; Lev-Wiesel, 2004; Sellers et al., 2005), but what has not been shown is if exposure to past or recent violence will also generate rape myth acceptance. As noted earlier, prior literature suggests that various forms of peer pressure such as family peer pressure and adolescent peer pressure can have an effect on men and sexual aggression (Margolis, 1998; Lev-Wiesel, 2004; Sellers et al., 2005). Exposure to violence such as family violence and dating violence has been reported as having significant lasting effects on adult relationships when witnessed as an adolescent (Kalmuss, 1984; Lichter & McCloskey, 2004; Mihalic & Elliot, 1997). The research failed to address the question on whether there is a correlation between peer pressure, exposure to past or recent violence exposure and rape myth acceptance.

Overall, it was found that those who report higher exposure to peer pressure will have higher reported levels of rape myth acceptance when compared to those who have not been exposed to high levels of peer pressure.

However, the levels of rape myth support among college students were relatively low. The results showed students exposed to high levels of peer pressure were significantly more likely than those exposed to low levels of peer pressure to report higher levels of rape myth. Those who report higher exposure to past violence will have higher reported levels of rape myth acceptance when compared to those who have been exposed to lower levels of violence or no past violence. The results showed no significant difference between students exposed to lower levels of violence or no past violence. Reported higher exposure to past violence will have higher reported levels of rape myth acceptance when compared to those who have been exposed to lower levels of violence or no past violence. The results showed no significant difference between students exposed to lower levels of violence or no past violence.

The research however is not without its limitations. There was a relatively small sample size of 81 men. There was only one university used for this study and it was only tested in one location. It was difficult to compare students with high levels of violence exposure and rape myth acceptance to students with lower levels. The number of students with high level of rape, violence, and peer pressure was not that high. Future research could test more than one University in different locations to achieve a larger sample size. A larger sample would probably make it easier to compare students with high levels of violence exposure and rape myth acceptance.

The implications of this research shows that students exposed to high levels of peer pressure will have higher levels of rape myth acceptance and those who reported higher levels of past exposure to violence will have higher reported levels of rape myth acceptance. These findings could be used to target those who are at higher risk for developing support in rape myths and provide counseling if need be. More education programs could be set up for those who have higher levels of rape myth acceptance as well.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Recent Violence Exposure ¹

Thinking about the neighborhood in which you currently live (or if you have lived in this neighborhood for less than 6 months, think about the most recent neighborhood in which you lived for more than 1 year), rate the occurrence of each of the following.

1. someone being slapped/hit/punched?
2. someone being beaten or mugged?
3. someone being threatened?
4. Have you been slapped?
5. Have you been threatened?
6. Have you been beaten?
7. Have you been victimized in the neighborhood by being beaten or mugged?
8. Have you been victimized in the neighborhood by being slapped/hit/punched?
9. Have you been victimized in the neighborhood by being threatened?

¹The questions from Singer, Anglin, Song, & Lunghofer (1995) were slightly modified in their wording to improve grammar/semantics.

Thinking about the home in which you were raised, rate the occurrence of each of the following:

10. someone else being threatened?
11. someone else being beaten?
12. witnessed someone else being slapped/hit/punched at home

Thinking about the school you attend rate the occurrence of each of the following:

13. someone else being threatened?
14. someone else being slapped/hit/punched?
15. someone else being beaten or mugged?
16. Have you been the victim of an attack or being stabbed?
17. someone else being shot at or shot?
18. Have you been the victim of a shooting or being shot at?
19. someone else being attacked or stabbed?
20. Have you been victimized at school by being slapped/hit/punched?
21. Have you been victimized at school by being beaten or mugged?
22. Have you been victimized at school by being threatened?

Past Violence Exposure Santor, Messervey & Kusumakar (1999).

1. Have you witnessed someone else being slapped/hit/punched in the past year?

2. Have you witnessed someone else being threatened in the past year?
3. Have you witnessed someone else being beaten or mugged in the past year?
4. Have you been shot or shot at in the past year?
5. Have you witnessed someone else being shot or shot at in the past year?
6. Have you been attacked or stabbed in the past year?
7. Have you witnessed someone else being attacked or stabbed in the past year?
8. Have you been victimized by being slapped/hit/punched in the past year?
9. Have you been victimized by being threatened in the past year?
10. Have you been victimized by being beaten or mugged in the past year?

Peer Pressure Items

1. My friends could push me into doing just about anything.
2. I give into peer pressure easily.
3. When at school, if a group of people asked me to do something, it would be hard to say no.
4. At times, I've broken rules because others have urged me to.
5. At times, I've done dangerous or foolish things because others dared me to.
6. I often feel pressured to do things I wouldn't normally do.
7. If my friends are drinking, it would be hard for me to resist having a drink.
8. I've skipped classes, when others have urged me to.

9. I've felt pressured to have sex, because a lot of people my own age have already had sex.
10. I've felt pressured to get drunk at parties.
11. At times I've felt pressured to do drugs, because others have urged me too.

Popularity Items

1. I have done things to make me more popular, even when it meant doing something I would not usually do.
2. I've neglected some friends because of what other people might think.
3. At times, I've ignored some people in order to be more popular with others.
4. I'd do almost anything to avoid being seen as a "loser."
5. It's important that people think I'm popular.
6. At times, I've gone out with people, just because they were popular.
7. I've bought things, because they were the "in" things to have.
8. At times, I've changed the way I dress in order to be more popular.
9. I've been friends with some people, just because others liked them.
10. I've gone to parties, just to be part of the crowd.
11. I often do things just to be popular with people at school.
12. At times, I've hung out with some people, so others wouldn't think I was unpopular.

Bumby CDSRS (1996)

1. Men who commit rape are probably responding to a lot of stress in their lives, and raping helps to reduce the stress.
2. Women who get raped probably deserve it.
3. Women usually want sex no matter how they can get it.
4. Since prostitutes sell their bodies for sexual purposes anyway, it is not as bad if someone forces them into sex.
5. If a woman does not resist strongly to sexual advances, she is probably willing to have sex.
6. Women often falsely accuse men of rape.
7. A lot of women who get raped had “bad reputations” in the first place.
8. If women did not sleep around so much, they would be less likely to get raped.
9. If a woman gets drunk at a party, it is really her own fault if someone takes advantage of her sexually.
10. When women wear tight clothes, short skirts, and no bra or underwear, they are just asking for sex.
11. A lot of women claim they were raped just because they want attention.
12. Victims of rape are usually a little bit to blame for what happens.

13. If a man had sex with a woman before, then he should be able to have sex with her anytime he wants.
14. Just fantasizing about forcing someone to have sex isn't all that bad since no one is really being hurt.
15. Women who go to bars a lot are mainly looking to have sex.
16. A lot of times when women say "no", they are just playing hard to get and really mean "yes".
17. Part of a wife's duty is to satisfy her husband sexually whenever he wants it, whether or not she is in the mood.
18. Often a woman reports rape long after the fact because she gets mad at the man she had sex with and is just trying to get back at him.
19. As long as a man does not slap or punch a woman in the process, forcing her to have sex is not as bad.
20. When a woman gets raped more than once, she is probably doing something to cause it.
21. Women who get raped will eventually forget about it and get on with their lives.
22. On a date, when a man spends a lot of money on a woman, the woman ought to at least give the man something in return sexually.
23. I believe that if a woman lets a man kiss and touch her sexually, she should be willing to go all the way.

24. When women act like they are too good for men, most men probably think about raping the women to put them in their place.
25. I believe that society and courts are too tough on rapists.
26. Most women are sluts and get what they deserve.
27. Before the police investigate a woman's claim for rape, it is a good idea to find out what she was wearing, if she had been drinking, and what kind of person she is.
28. Generally , rape is not planned – a lot of times it just happens.
29. If a person tells himself that he will never rape again, he probably won't.
30. A lot of men who rape do so because they are deprived of sex.
31. The reason a lot of women say “no” to sex is because they don't want to seem loose.
32. If a woman goes to the home of a man on their first date, she probably wants to have sex with him.
33. Many women have a secret desire to be forced into having sex.
34. Most of the men who rape have stronger sexual urges than other men.
35. I believe that any woman can prevent herself from being raped if she really wants to.
36. Most of the time, the only reason a man commits rape is because he was sexually assaulted as a child.

APPENDIX B- IRB APPROVAL

This email message is generated by the IRB online application program.

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approved

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Institutional Review Board

Office of Research Compliance

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