

Rape Myth Acceptance in Convicted Rapists

A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

DR LARISSA JOHNSON, CPSYCHOL
HCPC REGISTERED FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGIST
OXLEAS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

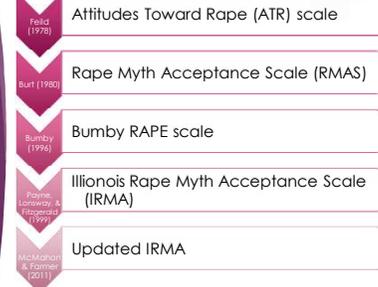
OVERVIEW

- ▶ INTRODUCTION
- ▶ AIMS & OBJECTIVES
- ▶ METHODOLOGY
- ▶ MAIN FINDINGS
- ▶ LIMITATIONS
- ▶ IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION: RAPE MYTHS & RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE

- ▶ RAPE MYTHS
 - ▶ Burt (1980): "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists"
 - ▶ Lonsway & Fitzgerald (1994): "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" (p.134)
 - ▶ Shift the blame for the crime toward the victim
- ▶ RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE (RMA)
 - ▶ Endorsement of rape myths
 - ▶ High RMA strongly associated with rape proclivity (Chapleau & Oswald, 2010; Edwards et al., 2011; Gray, 2006)
 - ▶ Evidence amongst convicted rapists (Chiroro et al., 2004)

INTRODUCTION: MEASURES OF RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE



AIM OF THE REVIEW

TO EXPLORE RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE AS A
CRIMINOGENIC NEED FOR ADULT MALES WHO HAVE
COMMITTED SEXUAL ASSAULTS AGAINST ADULT WOMEN

OBJECTIVES

- ▶ To determine if adult, male rapists can be distinguished from adult, male child molesters, non-sexual offenders, or non-offenders on measures on RMA
- ▶ To determine if there are differences in levels of RMA between different sub-groups of rapists, for example, those motivated by sex versus those motivated by anger
- ▶ To determine if difference in levels of RMA can discriminate between rapists who reoffend (recidivists) and those who do not
- ▶ To establish if RMA is responsive to sex offender treatment programs

METHODOLOGY: SCOPING EXERCISE & SEARCH STRATEGY

- ▶ SCOPING
 - ▶ establish whether reviews of a similar or identical nature had been completed or planned – none found
- ▶ SEARCH STRATEGY
 - ▶ 1: OvidSP, Web of Science, and Proquest were searched for published articles
 - ▶ 2: Hand searched reference lists of the full text articles which met the inclusion and exclusion criteria
 - ▶ 3: Contacted recognized experts in the field of sex offender research and rape-supportive attitudes

METHODOLOGY: INCLUSION CRITERIA

- ▶ Participants were adult (older than 18), male rapists
- ▶ Phenomenon of interest was rape myth acceptance
- ▶ Any of the following comparators: non-offenders (community controls), non-sexual offenders (e.g. Violent offenders), other categories of sexual offender (e.g. Child molester, recidivists and non-recidivists), or participants pre- and post-intervention
- ▶ Quantitative

METHODOLOGY: EXCLUSION CRITERIA

- ▶ Studies looking only at rape proclivity (i.e. a sample in which no one has been convicted of a rape)
 - ▶ Studies that did not utilize measures that were specifically used for the measurement of RMA
 - ▶ Solely qualitative
 - ▶ Not published in English
- NB: In applying the inclusion/exclusion criteria, some studies used the Bumby RAPE scale. However, when discussed with experts, the decision was made to exclude these studies as experts could not come to an agreement on whether the Bumby RAPE scale specifically measures rape myth acceptance versus general rape-supportive attitudes*

METHODOLOGY: SCREENING AND SELECTION



METHODOLOGY: QUALITY ASSESSMENT, & DATA EXTRACTION

- ▶ Cochrane Collaboration's tool for assessing risk of bias
 - ▶ empirical evidence of bias
 - ▶ likely direction of bias
 - ▶ likely magnitude of bias (Higgins & Green, 2011)
- ▶ Two independent assessors
- ▶ No "cut-off point" for exclusion
- ▶ Data extraction included
 - ▶ general information (date of extraction, reference citation, study author contact details, publication type)
 - ▶ study characteristics (methods, participants, and other pertinent information, e.g. any conflicts of interest)
 - ▶ key conclusions

MAIN FINDINGS

- ▶ Can adult, male rapists be distinguished from adult, male child molesters, non-sexual offenders, or non-offenders on measures on RMA?
- ▶ Are there differences in levels of RMA between different sub-groups of rapists?
- ▶ Can differences in levels of RMA discriminate between rapists who reoffend (recidivists) and those who do not?
- ▶ Is RMA amenable to sex offender treatment programmes?

Can adult, male rapists be distinguished from adult, male child molesters, non-sexual offenders, or non-offenders on measures on RMA?

Overholser & Beck (1986)

- No significant effect on RMA overall
- Main effect for group on Sex Role Stereotyping (SRS) subscale
- Child molesters displayed significantly higher levels of SRS (i.e. more conservative) than both community control groups
- Rapists were not distinguishable from the child molesters

Cohen (2012)

- Sex offenders reported lower level of RMA than non-offenders
- Cognitive distortions present in both, but in SO's interacted with lack of sex-role satisfaction, high trait anger & anxiety
- Distortions present in high risk situations or offenders but not for non-offenders

Beech et al. (2006)

- Sexually motivated offenders scored higher on the SRS subscale than non-sexual violent offenders and community non-offending males

Pitners (1994)

- RMA did not discriminate between child abusers and rapists

Can adult, male rapists be distinguished from adult, male child molesters, non-sexual offenders, or non-offenders on measures on RMA?

- ▶ Studies suggest that rapists may be distinguished from other non-sexual offenders and from community non-offending males on measures RMA
- ▶ Particularly on the sex-role subscales of the Burt Rape Myth Acceptance Scale
- ▶ Possible that these subscales are more sensitive to differences that separate sexual offenders from non-sexual offenders and non-offenders
- ▶ However, still difficulty in discriminating between child molesters and rapists when relying on rape myth acceptance as the distinguishing factor
- ▶ Unexpected result: sex offenders reported lower acceptance of rape myths than non-offenders in Cohen (2012) study

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Are there differences in levels of RMA between different sub-groups of rapists?

Beech et al. (2006)

- Knight and Prentky's (1990) classification: opportunistic, pervasively angry, vindictive, sexual non-sadistic and sexual sadistic rapists.
- Groups differed significantly on scores for the Adversarial Sexual Beliefs (ASB) subscale of RMA
- Opportunistic rapists scored significantly higher than both the sexual sadistic and sexual non-sadistic types – this result was also true for the Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence (AIV) subscale
- Sexual non-sadistic rapists had the lowest scores on the ASB scale
- No difference in RMA between rapists and sexual murderers

Stefanska et al. (2015)

- Explored potential differences between rapists who were also sexual killers and sexual killers who had never safely committed rape (i.e. without killing the victim)
- Of the men in the "high problem" group (offenders who were likely to report high levels of sexual entitlement beliefs, rape myths, have problems with being open to others and tend to believe that women are deceitful) 35% were found to endorse rape myths
- In the low problem group (those who did not report problems in the aforementioned areas) 13% endorsed rape myths

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Can differences in levels of RMA discriminate between rapists who reoffend (recidivists) and those who do not?

- ▶ Two studies examined recidivism outcomes
 - ▶ Beech et al. (2006)
 - ▶ Olver et al. (2014)
- ▶ Beech et al. (2006) did not explore recidivism in terms of RMA
- ▶ Olver et al. (2014): RMA was not found to be a significant predictor of sexual or violent recidivism nor did the study compare recidivists with non-recidivists

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Is RMA amenable to sex offender treatment programmes?

Beech et al. (2006)

- No main effect of treatment in sexual murderers and no effect in rapists overall
- Grouped hypologies: sexually motivated (opportunistic and sexual non-sadistic rapists), anger motivated (vindictive and pervasively angry rapists) and sexual sadistic rapists remained a standalone "sadistic" type
- Treatment had impact on hypology groups in that scores overall on the Sex Role Stereotyping scale showed an increase post-treatment
- No differences between hypologies

Oliver et al. (2014)

- Significant decrease in rape myths endorsed within the sample (offenders and non-offenders) from pre- to post-treatment

Pithers (1994)

- Reported a significant treatment effect
- Found that there was a reduction in acceptance of rape myths after completion of the victim empathy programme

Webster et al. (2004)

- Investigated differences in psychometric data between Black versus White sexual offenders
- Both groups decreased in RMA post-treatment
- However, when reviewing the statistics, it would appear that child molesters had significant, positive change in their rape myths post-treatment as compared to the rapists that seem to exhibit very little/no change at all

LIMITATIONS

- ▶ NO CONSENSUS ON PHRASEOLOGY
- ▶ VARIABILITY ACROSS STUDIES
- ▶ RMA TOOLS BOUND BY CULTURE AND TIME

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- ▶ Randomised control trials may not be feasible/practical
 - ▶ interested in relevance of an attitudinal variable rather than treatment efficacy or effectiveness as the primary outcome, attaining the "gold standard" as determined by Cochrane is out of reach
 - ▶ studies examining this construct would best not be marked as high risk based on the fact that they are conceptually different from randomized control studies
- ▶ Typological differences may highlight need for targeted treatment programmes
 - ▶ implicit measures could aid in this

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