

# Religiosity and Acceptance of Rape Myth in Conservative Christian Students

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## Introduction

- On college campuses, the chance of a woman being sexually assaulted is 1 in 3 verses 1 in 6 outside of college campuses.
- This study looks into the relationship between religiosity and the acceptance of rape myth (nonfactual statements about rape, i.e. "If a woman is dressed a certain way she is asking for it") on a conservative Christian college campus
- Freymeyer (1997) ran a similar study at a small Bible college in which he measured spiritual actions (i.e. prayer)-not religious belief. Freymeyer found a positive correlation between men who considered themselves highly spiritual and acceptance of rape culture, but a negative correlation in women.

## Question/Hypotheses

- Religious Orthodoxy: Commitment to core Christian beliefs.
- Research Question 1:** Is there an overall relationship between religious and acceptance of rape myth among Christian college students?
- Research Question 2:** Does any religious orthodoxy/myth acceptance pattern differ between men and women?
- We hypothesized that men who scored higher in religiosity would have a higher acceptance rate of rape myth, with the opposite pattern in women.

## Methodology

- Using an undergraduate research pool, responses from 219 subjects were collected (144 male, 75 female)
- Subjects were asked to respond to two scales of the Religious Orthodoxy Survey (Acceptance of Christianity and Rejection of Christianity; Fullerton & Hunsberger, 1982) and the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Survey (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999)
- The response sets for the scales were five-point Likert-like ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

## Results

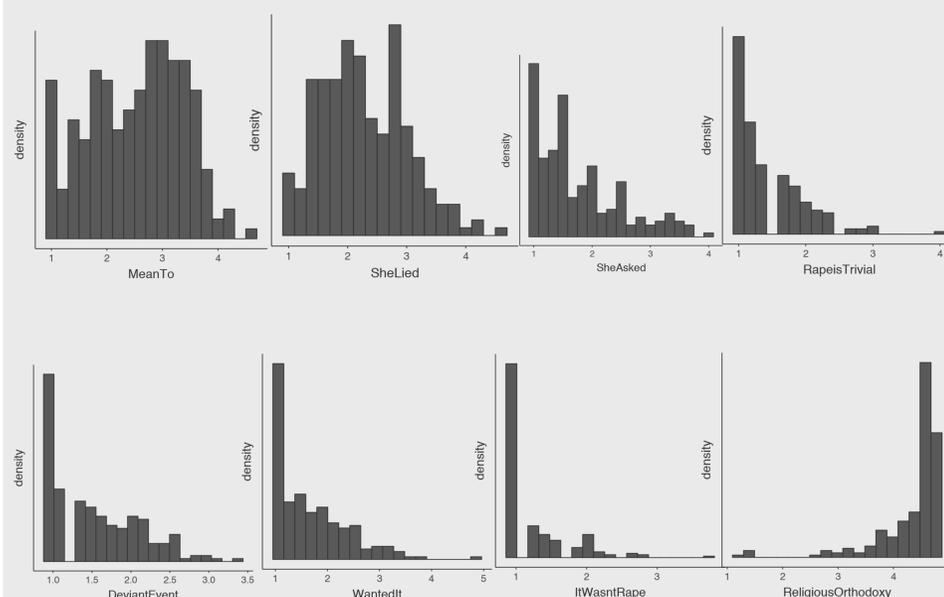
- Most rape myths were strongly rejected by both male and female students on a highly religious campus. The only two myth categories that were not strongly rejected were "he didn't mean to" and "she lied about being raped".
- A correlation matrix using the full data set (Pearson's  $r$ ) showed that subjects who **rejected** Christian beliefs had a higher correlation with acceptance of rape myth. In contrast, subjects who **accepted** Christian beliefs were less likely to accept rape myth.
- A relative importance linear regression analysis showed that for male subjects, the rape myth that accounted for the most variance in Christian belief was the rejection of the idea that rape is rarely experienced in everyday settings ("Rape is a Deviant Event"; Rejection of Christianity: 54% of 15% explained; Acceptance of Christianity: 52% of 12% explained).
- For female subjects, the rape myth that accounted for that most variance in Christian belief was the idea that women are to blame if they are raped ("It Wasn't Rape"; Rejection of Christianity: 56% of 27% explained; Acceptance of Christianity: 54% of 10% explained).

## Discussion

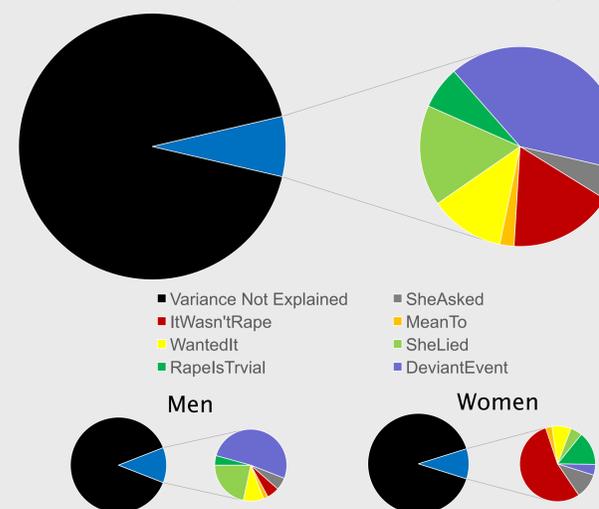
- We did not replicate Freymeyer's pattern-both men and women in our study showed the pattern that Freymeyer reported for women.
- However, men and women represented the core issues involved in rape differently.
- Our ability to generalize is limited because this particular study took place at a university with majority of students (>90%) from one religious tradition. We also used scales that suggest that only women are victims of rape. However, this study suggests that not all religious environments influence myths in the same way.
- We would like to collect converging evidence by, for example, using an experimental model, where subjects are placed in a scenario as oppose to a survey, or running the study at schools affiliated with other religions.
- Another variation of this particular research could include focus on the faculty and administration at different universities, or on the general population.

## References

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- Payne, D.L., Lonsway, K.A., Fitzgerald, L.F., (1999). Rape myth acceptance: Exploration of its measurement using the *Illinois rape myth acceptance scale*. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 33, 27-68. doi:10.1006/jrpe/1998.2238



### Outcome: Acceptance of Christianity



### Outcome: Rejection of Christianity

