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Spirituality and Rape Myth Acceptance: An Exploratory Study

Stephen M. Mattiace

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Spirituality and Rape Myth Acceptance: An Exploratory Study

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A thesis

Presented to

The School of Graduate Studies

Department of Higher Education and Student Development

Taylor University

Upland, Indiana

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development

_____

by

Stephen M. Mattiace

May 2010

Higher Education and Student Development

Taylor University
Upland, Indiana

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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MASTERS THESIS

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This is to certify that the Thesis of

Stephen M. Mattiace

entitled

Spirituality and Rape Myth Acceptance: An Exploratory Study
has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the
Master of Arts degree

in Higher Education and Student Development
May 2010

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ABSTRACT

The incidence of rape is a significant concern for college campuses (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000), and the acceptance of myths about rape abound on campuses and in society (Burt, 1980; Bohner, Danner, Siebler, & Samson, 2002; Carmody & Washington, 2001; Chiroro, Bohner, Viki, & Jarvis, 2004). A copious amount of research has examined factors that increase rape myth acceptance, or the belief in any false statement or thought that inaccurately portrays a rape situation (Foubert & Marriott, 1997; Foubert & Newberry, 2006; Foubert & Perry, 2007; Johnson, Kuck, & Schander, 1997). However, very limited research sought to identify decreases in myth acceptance. One study has examined the relationship between moral development and rape myth acceptance (Tatum & Foubert, 2009). Given the close connection between moral development and spiritual development (Fowler, 1980; Walker & Reimer, 2005), a connection between rape myth acceptance and spiritual development may exist.

This study proposed and examined the link between spiritual development and rape myth acceptance. Scores were examined from 123 men at a small, Midwest, private, liberal arts institution, who completed the Spiritual Maturity Index (Ellison, 1984) and the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999). A mean comparison indicated a moderate, negative correlation between spiritual development score and rape myth acceptance score, indicating that spiritual development and rape myth acceptance scores are inversely proportionate. This relationship informs professional practice in student development and encourages future research on the link between spiritual development and rape myth acceptance.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, college campuses are prime targets for violent crimes (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000). Rape is one of the violent crimes that occurs on college campuses, affecting nearly one out of every four college women (Fisher et al.). Malamuth and Check (1981) attribute some of the incidence of rape to specific, false beliefs about rape called rape myths. Burt (1980) defines Rape Myth Acceptance (RMA) as a false belief or misconception about a rape situation that trivializes the experience of the victim and can excuse the perpetrator of blame. Additionally, RMA is a pervasive problem in society and among college students (Bohner, Danner, Siebler, & Samson, 2002; Burt; Carmody, & Washington, 2001; Chiroro, Bohner, Viki, & Jarvis, 2004). Much of the research has examined acceptance of rape myths among unique college populations like fraternity members and male athletes (Foubert & Marriott, 1997; Foubert & Newberry, 2006; Foubert & Perry, 2007). Johnson, Kuck and Schander (1997) note that there is significant difference in rape myth acceptance among various socio-demographic categories, especially for specific myths.

There is little research on the effects of spiritual development in conjunction with the acceptance of rape myths. Existing research has addressed the perceptions of sexual assault and acceptance of rape myths in conjunction with levels of religious belief among clergy members (Sheldon & Parent, 2002). Other studies have looked at the impact of

moral development on RMA (Tatum & Foubert, 2009), and there is a strong indication that individuals who score higher in spiritual development also score higher in moral development (Walker & Reimer, 2005). Due to the link between spiritual and moral development, individuals who have a high level of spiritual development may have a lower RMA, but no clear link has yet been established. The current study will examine the connection between spiritual development and RMA.

This study provides vital insight into the RMA of college students at a small, private, non-denominational, Christian institution. Students' RMA was assessed according to spiritual development measures and provides insight into the beliefs and attitudes of the student population. The implications of the research inform future orientation considerations, residence life programming, and other institutional initiatives.

Documentation of the impact of spirituality on RMA is not present in the current literature, but this study explores the theoretical link between the two. The high incidence of rape among college women warrants a better understanding of the link between spirituality and RMA. In an attempt to better understand this link, the following research question has emerged:

Does the level of spiritual development among college men have an impact on their acceptance of rape myths?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prevalence of Rape and Rape Myth Acceptance

    Incidence of rape.

    Rape is a significant problem in the United States. In 2000, the National Institute of Justice found that 20-25% of college women reported surviving a rape or rape attempt (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000). Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) reported similar numbers. They found that 18% of women who completed the National Violence Against Women Survey reported being victims of a rape or attempted rape. Further analysis revealed that more than half of those women victimized had experienced their first rape or rape attempt before they were 18 years old. Tjaden and Thoennes reported that women who were raped before 18 years old were also significantly more likely to be victimized one or more times as an adult. The National Violence Against Women Survey (Tjaden & Thoennes) also found that nearly one third of the women who reported a completed rape also experienced physical injury during the encounter. Only 30% of these women received care for their injuries. Additionally, only one third of the women that were victimized reported the incident to a law enforcement agency (Greenfeld, 1997). Rape affects many women, and there is potential that the experiences of these women are

trivialized through the acceptance of rape myths.

Rape myths.

Many researchers consider RMA a pervasive problem among college students (Foubert & Marriott, 1997; Foubert & Newberry, 2006; Foubert & Perry, 2007*;* Burt, 1980). Rape myths are prevalent among the general population in society (Burt) and are found in many of the media products that students consume regularly. Film often portrays violence against women (Malamuth & Check, 1981), which has been shown in some studies to increase the likelihood of RMA (Bohner, Jarvis, Eyssel, & Siebler, 2005). Additionally, RMA is found in many news outlets. Franiuk, Seefelt, Cepress and Vandelloet (2008) found that more than 65% of newspaper articles concerning a rape case included at least one rape myth. These myths are rarely noticed by college students, particularly when the cases are high-profile, like the Kobe Bryant case and the Duke lacrosse team scandal. For example, in news articles surrounding the Kobe Bryant case the researchers found that over 42% of articles utilized the myth that "she is lying" (Burt, 1980) by questioning the alleged victim's honesty (Franiuk et al.). Though there has been progress in efforts to counter the effects of RMA, they are still accepted at a high rate (Ferro, Cermele, & Saltzman, 2008). Among college students, the highest rates of RMA are found in two groups: male athletes and fraternity members (Foubert & Perry). Due to the prevalence of rape myths and the high probability of RMA among college students, it is important to understand the impact of these myths, why they are so readily accepted, the utility of employing them, and the potential dangers of RMA related to the perpetration of rape and sexual assault.

The prevalence of RMA has been well documented. As previously described

RMA is found in many forms of media (Malamuth, 1981; Franiuk, Seefelt, Cepress, & Vandelloet, 2008; Franiuk, Seefelt, & Vandelloet, 2008). Research has consistently indicated that ascribing to rape myths has dangerous consequences for two groups in particular: individuals who ascribe to those myths and women who may have survived sexual assault, a rape attempt, or a completed rape.

Theoretical explanations for why rape and RMA are so prevalent are present in the current body of literature. Feminist theory has been used for many years to explain these concepts. The primary argument for the prevalence of both rape and RMA is as follows: Rape and RMA allows social control, by men over women, to maintain a patriarchal society (Bohner et al., 2005). Additionally, the prevailing attitudes and assumptions on how to avoid rape or sexual assault often place the responsibility on women. Foubert and Perry (2007) note that rape and RMA are issues for men as much as they are for women and that men need to be involved actively in reducing the incidence of rape and the lowering of RMA. The reason that Foubert and Perry propose that rape and RMA is a male issue is that men are by far the most likely to perpetrate a rape. Additionally, the acceptance of rape myths seems to be higher among men, especially those that participate in groups that promote more aggressive attitudes.

Chiroro et al. (2004) suggest that there are two main motives for why rape occurs. The first is that rape is motivated by sexual desire. Rape is a mating strategy that compensates for a lack of sex. In this motive, the sexual gratification outcome of rape is compared to the cost, the likelihood of being caught. This motive is strengthened when considering up to 44% of men admit that they are capable of and would commit rape if they knew they would not be caught (Johnson et al., 1997).

The second motivation posited is one of power. Similar to the feminist theory of rape and RMA, the power motivation focuses on maintaining status hierarchy between men and women. The power motivation is a framework that focuses at the macro level of power differential to explain the micro level attitude that men may have towards gaining control. Rape is used to intimidate women and to cause fear. When considering the power motivation it is important to note that rape is pseudo-sexual: while sex is the means used, the ultimate goal of rape is to assert power over another individual. This motivation has been supported by many researchers and is thought to be the prevailing motivation behind rape (Chiroro, Bohner, Viki, & Jarvis, 2004).

Utility of rape myths.

Rape myths serve a number of functions that will be described in detail. Before discussing the function of rape myths, it is important to attempt to answer the following questions: (a) "What is a rape myth?" and (b) "Which rape myths are people mostly likely to hold?" Burt (1980) discussed the following rape myths: (a) "Rape only happens to bad girls," (b) "Any healthy woman can resist a rapist if she really wants to," (c) "Women ask to be raped but pretend they do not want it," (d) "Women 'cry rape' when they feel they have something to cover up or have been jilted in some way," and (e) "Rapists are sex-starved, insane or both." As seen in Johnson et al. (1997), rape myths have important implications. This research found that participants believed women who are raped contribute to their own victimization and that rape is justifiable if a man has paid for a date. One quarter of participants believed a woman's past reputation and sexual history is an important consideration when assessing an alleged rape, and 16% said that rape could be avoided if a woman did not provoke the incident. Additionally, a woman

who has previously had sex with a man cannot be considered raped in a non-consenting sexual encounter according to nearly 8% of the respondents. The outcome of believing these myths is seen in men being less likely to be convicted of rape and women being less likely to report rape.

Alcohol use in a rape scenario further complicates the issue for many observers. Abbey and Harnish (1995) found that increases in sexual activity are often linked to alcohol use and that this holds true at higher levels for men than it does for women. However, Abbey and Harnish found that it is women who were perceived as sexually promiscuous when consensual or non-consensual sex occurred after they had consumed alcohol. In contrast, men are often excused from their sexual behavior while intoxicated. These findings combine to produce a paradoxical dilemma where women are condemned yet men are given a free pass when alcohol is used. In the case of rape, a woman who has consumed alcohol is often thought to have not taken steps to protect herself from the assault (Crawford, Wright, & Birchmeier, 2008).

RMA perpetuates these attitudes. There are many reasons why RMA remains high in men. First, by accepting rape myths men clear themselves of blame (Johnson et al., 1997). By accepting a rape myth, like "women ask to be raped but pretend they do not want it," men are removing blame from themselves by justifying their actions according to what they claim a woman wants. Second, RMA serves to justify non-stereotypical forms of rape, like acquaintance or marital rape (Johnson et al.). This is especially dangerous in light of the findings of Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) that only 14.1% of women victimized had been attacked by someone they did not know.

The acceptance of a rape myth allows men to excuse themselves from blame

(Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). When it is thought that the woman has control over the situation, wants to be raped, or prompted the rape because of what she was wearing or how she was acting, the male perpetrator is often excused. When this happens, the woman is then blamed, and it is thought that she could have prevented the attack, allowing the perpetuation of RMA. While women can play an active role in reducing their risk of rape, it is important to remember that the perpetrator is solely responsible for the event. This is especially true in light of the power motivation for rape. A man who willfully takes the power of choice away from a woman is responsible for the actions that follow.

Women, by comparison, often use the acceptance of rape myths to ensure safety. For women, RMA has been linked to denial of vulnerability. This happens when a woman believes a rape myth and then focuses on differences between the myth and her own self-perception (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995; Bohner, Weisbrod, Barzvi, & Schwarz, 1993; Bohner et al., 2002). Harrison, Howerton, Secarea, and Nyugen (2008) attribute this focus on in-group bias where people do not attribute blame to individuals with similarities to themselves. Giacopassi and Dull (1986) support that people will reject myths that have a negative reflection on their social categories, yet will not reject myths that are beneficial to their category. More specifically, a woman is more willing to accept a rape myth if she views the victim as someone very different than herself, leading to less victim empathy and more blame being placed on the victim. Conversely, she will be more likely to reject a rape myth when she identifies closely with the victim, resulting in more victim empathy and higher levels of responsibility being placed on the perpetrator (Giacopassi & Dull).

Men employ rape myths in a different manner. It has been proposed that rape myth endorsement allows men to continue to act in marginalizing ways towards women without taking responsibility for their actions (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). Additionally, it is also thought that men often use gender stereotypes to remove responsibility in a rape situation (Deitz, Littman, & Bentley, 1984). This is significant in light of findings that men report both a high proclivity towards rape and high acceptance rates of rape myths (Johnson et al., 1997; Bohner et al., 2005).

Rape myth acceptance and demographics.

Racial differences also exist in the acceptance of rape myths. Franiuk, Seefelt, and Vandello (2008) found that White participants had lower RMA compared to their non-White counterparts. Additionally, Black participants in another study believed that the perpetrator was more likely to be a stranger than did White participants (Johnson et al., 1997). While this is not conclusive, it does offer some insight into differences between people groups. RMA is thought to be high in other countries as well. Bohner et al. (1993) found similar scores on an RMA scale in the United States and Germany. In 2002, researchers found that samples from the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands all had high RMA scores (Bohner et al., 2000).

Unique populations.

Much of the research on RMA has been conducted with college students, although select studies have incorporated other populations including alumni (Ferro et al., 2008) and participants from multiple countries (Bohner et al., 2002; Chiroro et al., 2004). The focus of previous research has been conducted on men who are student athletes or fraternity members (Foubert & Perry, 2007). The authors of this study note that these

populations are more likely to be involved in sexual assault or rape and that they are likely to have high RMA. There has been extremely limited research focusing on RMA among other groups of students. Due to this lack of research, it is important to focus on other groups to better understand the influence of RMA on college men who are not considered high risk for sexual assault perpetration.

Spirituality and RMA

Moral and faith development.

In order to fully understand the connection between spiritual and moral development, it is beneficial to briefly explore Kohlberg's stages of moral development (1974). Kohlberg presented three levels of moral reasoning and six stages of moral development. The levels "preconventional," "conventional," and "post-conventional" describe sociomoral perspectives (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998).

Kohlberg's stages of moral development.

Kohlberg's (1974) stages of moral development are extensive and thorough. In stage one, Heteronomous Morality is characterized by obedience of rules to avoid punishment from an authority that has power. In stage two, Individualistic, Instrumental Morality is characterized by adherence to rules when it is in the best interest of the individual. There is a pragmatism to this thought process of seeking satisfaction for the self while trying to avoid negative consequences. In stage three, Interpersonally Normative Morality is characterized by the fulfillment of social roles and defining what is right based on the expectations of those close to the individual. In essence, stage three is based heavily on fitting in with those around the individual. In stage four, Social Systems Morality is based primarily on external expectations. In this stage the individual

will look to the laws and norms of the dominant society to determine what is morally right. In stage five, Human Rights and Social Welfare Morality assumes that there are fundamental human rights and values that need to filter all laws, mores, and decisions. There is a sense in stage five that the individual will live out moral obligations because of the belief that everyone shares in the outcomes of each individual's choices. Finally, in stage six, Morality of Universalizable, Reversible, and Prescriptive General Ethical Principles is based on a mindset that all choices need to be made with complete impartiality while respecting the basic and inherent dignity within each individual. Stage six is a conceptual stage, and Kohlberg claims that rare individuals such as Ghandi and Martin Luther King, Jr., have functioned in stage six.

According to Kohlberg (1974), as the individual moves through each stage there is an increase in moral reasoning. Each of these stages will be applicable to any situation the individual encounters. That is, an individual in a specific stage will show a pattern of reasoning, guided by the current stage, which is consistent in all situations. Additionally, it is important to remember that individuals may move through the stages at different rates and may not always progress through each stage. Kohlberg noted that stage six was a conceptual stage that was needed to complete the theory. The likelihood that an individual would attain this stage of moral development is remote.

Kohlberg (1974) claimed, "in some sense... to ultimately live up to moral principles requires faith" (Fowler, 1980, p. 167). He continues to posit that highly developed morality is tied inescapably to faith and that as one develops in moral reasoning the individual will be compelled towards faith (Fowler). In this case faith is defined as the process of composing an image to an ultimate power, center, or deity.

Fowler uses this idea from Kohlberg as the basis of his theory. With this in mind, it is logical to assume that highly developed spirituality is connected to high levels of moral development. Whereas Kohlberg does not find a compelling reason to have faith development in his lower stages, he does conclude that by stage five a developed faith or spirituality is generally necessary. By stage six Kohlberg posits that faith is the answer to the question, "why be moral?"

Fowler proposes a faith development model that is based on advancing through a pre-stage followed by six stages. Progression is prompted by environmental stimuli. It is important to note that Fowler's conception of faith is synonymous with spirituality.

Fowler's stages of faith development.

Fowler stage model begins with the pre-stage of Undifferentiated Faith which is the part of life where the infant responds to stimuli and forms a disposition towards the world. In stage one, Intuitive-Projective Faith starts at the convergence of speech and thought for the child. It is characterized by the learning of new things and responding with moods and actions. Stage one is usually seen between ages three and seven. Stage two, Mythic-Literal Faith, is brought about by concrete operational thinking. The individual orders the intuitive-based concepts of the world from stage one and transitions to a more objective mode of thinking. In stage three, Synthetic -Conventional Faith generally begins during adolescences and posits that faith is generalized beyond the individual. As there are more demands on the individual's life one must synthesize his or her beliefs with new experiences.

Stage four, Individuative-Reflective Faith, is characterized by decisions that differentiate the individual from groups and cause reflections on questions that are self-

serving or are attentive to the needs of others. This stage is characterized by self-assurance. A critical move is generally seen in stage four due to the movement from adolescence to adulthood. Stage five, Paradoxical-Consolidative Faith, defines the individual as he or she moves away from the need to be self-assured towards a faith that becomes more outward- looking. The individual will look to unify opposites and focuses on more symbolic experiences. There is a disconnect, however, between what one sees and what one does. Stage five generally is not realized until midlife. Finally, the sixth stage is Universalizing Faith. It is rare, but when it does occur it is characterized by a sense that all beings are part of an ultimate environment. There is an actualization of what it means to be human.

Fowler relies heavily on Kohlberg in his theory of faith development, but differentiates his model by claiming that faith stages integrate emotions and thoughts in a mode of knowing that helps make sense of the world. Faith development is a broad way of understanding and adding context to the stages of moral development. As Fowler notes, faith stages should be preceded by specific moral stages. In other words, in order for an individual to proceed through a faith stage they will first need to reach a corresponding moral stage. When conceptualizing this link, Fowler points out that moral and faith stages do not always line up with ease. For example, faith stage four would most likely occur when the individual is moving from moral stages four to five, or those in faith stage five can be at moral stages five or six. Fowler also believes that as one develops morally there is a need to develop through faith and spirituality.

In 1977, Clark Power undertook a small but thorough study that looked at the link between Kohlberg's moral stages and Fowler's faith stages (as cited in Fowler, 1980). He

found that although there was not a direct numerical link between moral and faith stages, there was a positive correlation between moral and faith development. Those who scored high in faith development also scored high in moral development.

Based on the link between moral and faith development, we are able to examine the impact of spirituality on RMA. There has been limited research exploring spirituality and RMA. More common in the research is the link between moral development and RMA. In a recent study, Tatum and Foubert (2009) found that RMA decreased for individuals that scored high on a measure of moral development. These authors noted that moral development, along with other factors like intellectual ability, are significant influencers on RMA. Other research has been conducted on the relationship between religiosity and level of RMA among clergy members (Sheldon & Parent, 2002). However, the current literature is in fact void of any research that addresses the relationship between spirituality and RMA. Walker and Reimer (2005) examined the connection between moral and spiritual development. Building off the influential works of Kohlberg, Walker and Reimer noted that substantial evidence exists that spiritual development is directly tied to moral development. As spiritual development continues to increase so does moral development. Although spiritual development is not needed for moral development, "spiritual excellence does seem to entail the moral virtues that are at the core of morality" (Walker & Reimer, p. 235). Due to the influence of moral development on RMA (Tatum & Foubert), the connection between spiritual development and RMA is a fruitful line of research to explore.

Due to the current research on moral development and the theoretical link between spirituality and moral development, it is possible to examine the link between

the Spiritual Maturity Index (SMI) and Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Short Form

(IRMA-SF). It was therefore hypothesized that a negative relationship exists between

SMI and IRMA-SF scores. A simple correlation analysis was used to examine this

relationship.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants consisted of 146 male undergraduate students attending a small, private, faith-based university located in the Midwest region of the United States. Participants lived on-campus on one of three different floors. Floors were chosen with the assistance of the Residence Life staff to allow for follow-up programming on RMA. This was done so that all participants would have the opportunity to take part in processing the themes presented through the IRMA-SF. Participation in the current study was completely voluntary. Those who agreed to participate were given the appropriate research materials and completed the scales immediately. In an effort to lessen the danger of survey fatigue and to protect anonymity, participants were not asked to provide demographic information.

Materials

The current research utilized the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale Short Form (IRMA-SF) by Payne, Lonsway, and Fitzgerald (1999) to assess the acceptance of rape myths among the participants. Spiritual development was assessed with the Spiritual Maturity Index (SMI) designed by Ellison (1983).

Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale Short Form.

The IRMA-SF, which measures rape myth acceptance, utilizes 20 items which

are comprised of a 7-point Likert scale. The IRMA-SF measures acceptance of an overall

construct of rape myth acceptance. It is designed for preliminary research and to test

whether RMA is a significant concern in a given sample (Payne et al., 1999). Seventeen

of the items measure RMA and three are items that are not scored. Scores on the IRMA-

SF range from 17 to 199, with higher scores indicating higher acceptance of rape myths.

Internal consistency of the IRMA-SF was reported as a Cronbach alpha of .87 (Payne et

al.). The IRMA-SF is correlated to the full Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance scale (IRMA)

($r = .97$, $p = .001$). According to Payne et al., the IRMA has high construct validity,

correlating significantly ($p < .001$) with the Sex-Role Stereotype scale ($r = .55$), Sexism

scale ($r = .63$), Adversarial Sexual Beliefs scale ($r = .74$), Hostility Towards Women scale

($r = .57$), Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence scale ($r = .71$), and the Attitudes Towards

Violence scale ($r = .50$).

Spiritual Maturity Index.

The SMI, created in 1983 by Ellison, utilizes a 6-point Likert scale design, with

categories ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." It contains 30 items, 12

of which are reverse scored. Higher scores on the SMI indicate increased levels of

spiritual maturity, characterized by closeness in relationship to the god of Judeo-Christian

beliefs. The reliability of the SMI has been reported as a Cronbach's alpha of .87 and .92

by Buhrow et al. and Bassett et al., respectively (in Stevenson, 1999). Ellison found that

the SMI correlates significantly with the Spiritual Well-Being Scale ($r = .57$, $p = .001$).

Procedure

Participants were given the surveys (IRMA-SF & SMI) in conjunction with the university's annual Residence Life survey. The surveys were administered by a Resident Assistant from each floor. These representatives were given explicit verbal instructions on how to administer the surveys and the importance of underscoring voluntary participation. Participants were given a packet containing instructions, informed consent documentation (Appendix C), and the aforementioned surveys. Participants returned all surveys upon completion by depositing them into the folder provided. The returned data was analyzed using a simple correlational model.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Participants

Of the 146 possible participants 123 responses were returned. Of those 123 responses 11 were dropped due to participants answering less than the minimum 90% of items. In addition, 26 participants failed to answer all the items on the survey but still completed over 90% of the survey. Of these 26, one participant answered 46 items, one participant answered 47 items, three participants answered 48 items, and 21 participants answered 49 items. The remaining 85 participants answered all 50 items. A mean replacement was utilized to account for the missing data in the responses of these 26 participants.

Spiritual Maturity Index and Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Short Form

Both the SMI and IRMA-SF were highly reliable in the current study. The internal consistency for the SMI in this sample was Cronbach's alpha of .88. The internal consistency for the IRMA-SF had a Cronbach's alpha of .87. Both scales were also examined for reliability if any items were deleted. The analyses revealed all the items were maximizing alpha scores.

Data Analysis

A simple correlation was performed to determine the relationship between spiritual development scores on the SMI and RMA scores on the IRMA-SF. This analysis revealed a moderate negative relationship between spiritual development and RMA (r=-.352, p=.01).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Findings

The purpose of this study was two-fold: (a) to establish a framework for the impact of spiritual development on RMA and (b) to provide evidence of a connection between these two constructs. The connection between spiritual development and RMA is an area that has not been examined thus far. This study found that as men's level of spiritual development increased there was a moderate but significant decrease in the acceptance of rape myths. This is consistent with the theoretical foundation that spiritual development, like moral development (Tatum & Foubert, 2009), will decrease RMA. The link between moral development and RMA clarifies the current findings. Fowler (1980) contends that faith and moral development are intertwined. Fowler connects Kohlberg's stages of moral development with stages of faith development, noting that Kohlberg identifies the need for faith development in advanced moral development stages. Walker and Reimer (2005) confirmed the link between moral and spiritual development. Their finding that spiritual development entails a high level of moral reasoning supported both Fowler and Kohlberg. The link that Kohlberg, Fowler, and Walker and Reimer found between moral development and spiritual development seems to be confirmed in the current study.

One way to understand better the current findings is to examine themes that are present in both spiritual development and resistance to RMA. One such theme is empathy. According to a number of studies (Foubert & Marriot, 1997; Foubert & Newberry, 2006; Foubert & Perry, 2007), empathy is an important consideration in decreasing RMA. Ellison asserts that spiritually mature individuals are more likely to cope with, and display empathetic attitudes towards, the suffering and pain of others than are their less spiritually mature counterparts. Empathy as a key component to spiritual development and to lower RMA helps explain the connection between these two variables in the current study.

In the current study it is not possible to identify whether changes in spiritual development caused changes in RMA or vice-versa. RMA and spiritual development are clearly linked; the current study finds a connection between the level of spiritual development and RMA. High levels of spiritual development were connected with low levels of RMA and high levels of RMA were connected with low levels of spiritual development. What cannot be confirmed is whether this relationship occurs due to one variable directly influencing the other.

Implications for Practice

The current study informs two significant implications for practice. Given the high levels of rape and RMA among college students (Foubert & Marriot, 1997; Foubert & Newberry, 2006; Foubert & Perry, 2007; Burt, 1980), the need for effective programming is important. Empathy-based programming has been shown to decrease RMA on campuses (Foubert & Marriot; Foubert & Newberry; Foubert & Perry). Programming that is empathy-based uses a systematic approach to reduce RMA and rape

incidence by describing a male-on-male rape situation. Using a male-on-male description helps men to connect their feelings to the experiences that most women feel after surviving a rape attempt (Foubert & Marriot; Foubert & Perry). The inclusion of empathy-based programming along with a focus on spiritual development would seem to decrease RMA more than empathy-based programming alone.

The second implication for practice is the need for spiritual development. Programming that supports spiritual development should promote the following three components: empathy towards other, faith that is autonomous, and engaging in spiritual self-reflection (Stevenson, 1999). First, empathy towards others is a key factor to successful spiritual development practice. Being able to look beyond one's self and display empathy towards others is a key characteristic of an individual who is moving through Fowler's third, fourth, and fifth stages (Fowler, 1980). The second key characteristic that correlates to high levels of spiritual development is autonomous faith. Promoting faith development that is autonomous will induce growth through Fowler's fourth and fifth stages. Finally, spiritual self-reflection is important for stage four spiritual development. Programmatic initiatives that foster skills and habits that are self-reflective will increase levels of spiritual development and the progression of faith stages in participants.

As the current study shows, high levels of spiritual development are correlated with low levels of RMA. While the connection between spiritual development and RMA cannot be attributed to a specific element, an increased focus on spiritual development may aid in lowering RMA among male college students.

Future Research Implications

   Due to the limitations of the current study, and with virtually no existing research concerning spiritual development and RMA, additional research is necessary. Five key areas that need to be studied in the future are: (a) the longitudinal effect of spiritual development on RMA, (b) utilizing a method that examines the impact of spiritual development on RMA in a representative sample, (c) the impact of spiritual development in conjunction with other factors that may decrease RMA, (d) the inclusion of a more sensitive spiritual development scale, and (e) an examination of specific myth adherence.

   When examining RMA, change over time is an important consideration. Previous research by Foubert and Perry (2007) focused on the impact of a program on RMA change over the course of seven months. Foubert and Perry note that the impact of RMA over time is of significant concern. Given that the current research examined students at all class ranks and ages, future research should focus on the change in spiritual development and RMA throughout college.

   The current study looks at the connection between RMA and spiritual development but is unable to predict whether spiritual development causes a change in RMA. The theoretical framework put forth in the current work indicates that as one's level of spiritual development increases the level of RMA will decrease. As Foubert and Marriot (1997) note, increasing specific characteristics, such as empathy, may decrease myth adherence. Tatum and Foubert (2009) also found a decrease in RMA as moral development continued. Given the connection of lowered RMA scores with both empathy-based training and moral development, future research focused on the direct

impact of spiritual development on RMA will add support to the theoretical framework proposed herein.

The current study is quite narrow in its scope; additional factors that may influence spiritual development and RMA are not examined. Factors such as education concerning rape or rape myths, gender, age, class rank, and moral development should be examined. Future research should focus on other factors that may influence spiritual development and RMA to shed light on the interaction of these constructs.

Finally, the use of more accurate instruments is suggested for future research. The SMI is limited in its ability to measure elements of spirituality that do not pertain directly to spiritual maturity. This limits the SMI from being able to assess spiritual well-being (Stevenson, 1999). Due to the inherent limitations of the SMI, it is advised that future research include an instrument that measures other aspects of spirituality, such as spiritual well-being. Continued use of the SMI alone will not be as beneficial in providing a robust understanding of spiritual development and RMA. Using the SMI in conjunction with additional spirituality scales will provide a better understanding of the connection between spiritual development and RMA. The IRMA-SF should also be replaced with the IRMA. The more accurate and myth specific version of the IRMA should be used whenever possible in future research. Because the IRMA was not used in this study, it is not clear if certain myths are more closely tied to spiritual development than are other myths.

Limitations

The current study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the current findings. First, the sample was comprised of men at a small,

religious, liberal arts college in the Midwest. The lack of diversity on the specific campus does not allow for the generalization of these findings to the greater college population. Political ideology, religious foundations, gender role attitudes, and other beliefs are thought to vary minimally at the current institution compared to the variance that these constructs are thought to have at colleges and universities nationwide.

This study also lacked randomization in its sample. The use of a non-random cluster sample decreases external validity. Using participants that live on the same floor together decreases diversity of thought. The lack of randomization in the sample further perpetuates the homogeneity of the sample.

The sample used in the current study did not report demographic information. Since the sample was comprised of college men who could have been at any class level or age, and this information was not collected, it is not known whether age or class rank had an impact on one or both measures in the current study. Supported by the findings of previous researchers, (Franiuk, Seeflet, & Vandello, 2008; Johnson et al., 1997; Bohner et al., 1993; Bohner et al., 2002; Chiroro et al., 2004; and Foubert & Perry, 2007), the inclusion of demographic information such as race, country of origin, and athletic participation would have resulted in higher validity.

The use of the SMI and IRMA-SF also limits the current study. Stevenson (1999) critiqued the SMI as measuring a specific set of beliefs, focused on the Christian worldview. This limits the current study by eliminating other beliefs that constitute spiritual development which are not consistent with the Christian population for which the scale was designed. The IRMA-SF also limits the application of the current study. According to Payne, Lonsway, and Fitzgerald (1999), the IRMA-SF does not measure

specific myth adherence, but rather a general overall RMA. Using the IRMA would have allowed for a more accurate analysis of the link between spiritual development and RMA, distinguishing which myths were the least accepted and which myths were the most accepted.

Finally, the theoretical framework put forth should be refined. While the current study shows a link between spiritual development and RMA, simply tying these constructs together without considering the impact of other variables limits the scope of the study. The value gained by understanding the link between spiritual development and RMA is restricted without a more robust understanding of how other factors influence both spiritual development and RMA. Continuing to uncover the impact that moral development (Foubert & Perry, 2007) has on RMA is important to the current discussion. Having an understanding that these constructs are related is valuable, but the current framework will be more informative when a better understanding of the link between spiritual development and RMA is examined.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the current research sheds valuable insight on the interaction of spiritual development and RMA. The hypothesis that spiritual development would negatively impact RMA is confirmed in the current study. The current study also proposes a theoretical basis which connects spiritual development and RMA. This framework provides vital insight into factors that increase RMA and suggests one characteristic, spiritual development, that is associated with levels of RMA. Professional practice implications, focused on continued spiritual development and the inclusion of spiritual development and empathy-based programming have also been supported.

Continued research is warranted into how spiritual development impacts RMA, whether it impacts specific myth adherence, how other factors influence spiritual development and RMA, and whether the current framework is valid beyond the current sample. Finally, the current study adds valuable insight into current and future practice in student affairs efforts in combating RMA and rape.

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APPENDIX A

SPIRITUAL MATURITY INDEX

1. My faith doesn't primarily depend on the formal church for its vitality.

2. The way I do things from day to day is often affected by my relationship with God.

3. I seldom find myself thinking about God and spiritual matters each day.

4. Even if the people around me opposed my Christian convictions I would still hold fast to them.

5. The encouragement and example of other Christians is essential for me to keep on living for Jesus.

6. I feel like I need to be open to consider new insights and truths about my faith.

7. I am convinced that the way I believe spirituality is the right way.

8. People that don't believe the way that I do about spiritual truths are hard-hearted.

9. I feel that a Christian needs to take care of his or her own needs first in order to help others.

10. My faith doesn't seem to give me a definite purpose in my daily life.

11. I find that following Christ's example of sacrificial love is one of my most important goals.

12. My identity (who I am) is determined more by my personal or professional situation than by my relationship with God.

13. Walking closely with God is the greatest Joy in my life.

14. I feel that identifying and using my spiritual gifts is not really important.

15. I don't seem to be able to live in such a way that my life is characterized by the fruits of the Spirit.

16. When my life is done, I feel like only those things that I've done, as part of following Christ will matter.

17. I believe that God has used the most "negative" or difficult times in my life to draw me closer to him.

18. I feel like God has let me down in some of the things that have happened to me.

19. I have chosen to forego various gains when they have detracted from my spiritual witness or violated spiritual principles.

20. Giving myself to God regardless of what happens to me is my highest calling in my life.

21. I don't regularly study the Bible in depth on my own.

22. I actively look for opportunities to share my faith with non-Christians.

23. My relationships with others are guided by my desire to express the love of Christ.

24. I don't regularly have times of deep communion with God in personal (private) prayer.

25. More than anything else in life I want to know God intimately and to serve him.

26. Worship and fellowship with other believers is a significant part of my Christian life.

27. It seems like I am experiencing more of God's presence in my daily life than I have previously.

28. I feel like I am becoming more Christ-like.

29. I seem to have less consistent victories over temptation than I used to.

30. On the whole, my relationship with God is alive and Growing.

APPENDIX B:

ILLINOIS RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE SHORT FORM

1. If a woman is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for
    letting things get out of control.

2. Although most women wouldn't admit it, they generally find being physically forced
    into sex a real "turn-on."

3. If a woman is willing to "make out" with a guy, then it's no big deal if he goes a little
    further and has sex.

4. Many women secretly desire to be raped.

5. Most rapists are not caught by the police.

6. If a woman doesn't physically fight back, you can't really say that it was rape.

7. Men from nice middle-class homes almost never rape.

8. Rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at men.

9. All women should have access to self-defense classes.

10. It is usually only women who dress suggestively that are raped.

11. If the rapist doesn't have a weapon, you can't really call it rape.

12. Rape is unlikely to happen in the woman's own familiar neighborhood.

13. Women tend to exaggerate how much rape affects them.

14. A lot of women lead a man on and then they cry rape.

15. It is preferable that a female police officer conduct the questioning when a woman
    reports a rape.

16. A woman who "teases" men deserves anything that might happen.

17. When women are raped, it's often because the way they said "no" was ambiguous.

18. Men don't usually intend to force sex on a woman, but sometimes they get too carried

away.

19. A woman who dresses in skimpy clothes should not be surprised if a man tries to

force her to have sex.

20. Rape happens when a man's sex drive gets out of control.

APPENDIX C:

INFORMED CONSENT

Spirituality and Understanding of Rape and Rape Situations.

Investigator: Stephen M Mattiace, Masters of Arts in Higher Education Graduate Student

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read the following explanation of this study. This statement describes the purpose, procedures, benefits, risks, discomforts, and precautions of the program. Also described are the alternative procedures available to you, as well as your right to withdraw from the study at any time. No guarantees or assurances can be made as to the results of the study.

Explanation of Procedures You are being asked to participate in a research project to investigate the impact of level of spiritual development on perceptions and understanding of rape situations.

The approach of the research is through the use of two questionnaires. You will complete the first questionnaire that contains 30 questions, and then complete the second questionnaire which contains 20 questions.

Risk: There is minimal risk involved in participating in this study. Due to the subject being studied it is possible that you may have slight emotional discomfort. If this is the case you will have the opportunity to speak with the primary investigator following the survey time, participate in a followup program where you will be able to better understand the issues or participate in counseling at the Taylor University counseling office.

Benefit: The direct benefit to this study is a better understanding of the concepts that are involved in understanding sexual assault. The findings from this research will

help to better inform the current practices in educating college students about the impact of sexual assault on campuses.

Confidentiality All information gathered from the study will remain confidential. Your identity as a participant will not be disclosed to any unauthorized persons; only the researchers and the faculty advisor will see the collected surveys. All surveys will have any identifiable information, including this informed consent document split from the questions answered.

Withdrawal Without Prejudice Participation in this study is voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You are free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in this project at any time without prejudice from the researcher

Payment for Research Related Injuries: Although there are no risks of injury involved with this study, Taylor University, and the research team have made no provisions for monetary compensation in the event of injury resulting from the research. In the event of such injury, we will provide assistance in locating and accessing appropriate health care or counseling services. The cost of health care services is the responsibility of the participant.

Alternative Procedures If a person chooses not to participate, an alternative procedure is not necessary. Questions Any questions concerning the research project can be directed to Stephen M Mattiace at Stmattiace@taylor.edu or by calling (phone number provided on business card).

This agreement states that you have received a copy of this informed consent. Your signature below indicates that you agree to participate in this study.

Signature of Subject_____ Date: _____

Subject name (printed) _____