

## Rape Myth Acceptance: A Comparison of Military Service Academy and Civilian Fraternity and Sorority Students

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Although both the military and fraternities have been theorized to be characterized by norms and attitudes that serve to legitimize violence against women, no previous work has examined the potential similarity and differences in rape-supportive beliefs of these 2 environments or the people drawn to them. Further, the belief systems of women within these organizations have received little attention. As such, the current study sought to serve as an initial exploration of the rape-supportive belief systems of people drawn to these groups. Participants were recruited from students entering 2 military service academies (U.S. Military Academy,  $n = 1,169$ , 1,003 men, 166 women; U.S. Naval Academy,  $n = 1,916$ , 1,551 men, 365 women) and fraternities and sororities at a Midwestern university ( $n = 393$ , 188 men, 205 women). All participants completed the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale–Short Form. Consistent with previous findings related to gender, men were more accepting of rape myths than women. Further, there was more variability in the levels of rape myth acceptance among military service academy and fraternity men than among military service academy and sorority women. Although across all groups the women expressed significantly lower levels of rape myth acceptance than the men, women and men from the United States Military Academy were more closely aligned in their beliefs than women and men from the other samples. Implications for sexual assault prevention education are discussed.

*Keywords:* rape myth acceptance, military, fraternities and sororities, gender difference

Despite increased focus on the problem of rape in U.S. society, prevalence rates have remained remarkably consistent over the last 30 years. Re-

search has repeatedly found that anywhere from one in six to one in four women in the United States have experienced an attempted or completed sexual assault (e.g., Black et al., 2011; Elliott, Mok, & Briere, 2004; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Among college women, between 20% and 26% have experienced completed or attempted assault during their lifetime (Brener, McMahon, Warren, & Douglas, 1999; Carey, Durney, Shepardson, & Carey, 2015; Fisher, Daigle, & Cullen, 2010; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987). Within the military, the rates are similar, if not higher, with 23% to 30% of women having experienced sexual assault or attempted sexual assault during their military service (Department of Defense, 2012; Skinner et al., 2000). One possible explanation for the consistency in prevalence estimates is that we live in a “rape culture,” which is

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associated with a complex set of cultural beliefs and attitudes that support and perpetuate gender stereotypes and violence against women (see Edwards, Turchik, Dardis, Reynolds, & Gidycz, 2011, for a review).

Central to belief systems related to rape is the concept of rape myths, defined by Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) as “attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression towards women” (p. 134). In this study, we assessed the pattern of rape myth acceptance (RMA) among men and women drawn from two military service academies and from fraternities and sororities at a civilian university. These samples represent unique groups because although they are all drawn from the larger culture of U.S. college students, the students choose to become members of selective organizations (i.e., military and fraternities and sororities). It has been argued that both the military and college fraternities are characterized by norms supportive of aggression toward women (Kalof, 1993; Turchik & Wilson, 2010). Although these types of organizations share characteristics that are considered rape-supportive (e.g., an emphasis on hypermasculinity, dominance of men, rigid gender roles), there are differences that may influence the underlying attitudes of individuals drawn to them. Most notably, the military is a profession whereas fraternities and sororities are social organizations. Although women are a minority group in the military, they are a part of the organization and work alongside men in the accomplishment of the mission, whereas fraternities and sororities are gender-segregated organizations that may come together for joint activities, but are inherently distinct in their structure and goals. Within this study, the beliefs of men and women were compared both between and within institutions to examine whether people drawn to these organizations have particular rape supporting beliefs and if these organizations attract people with similar (or differing) beliefs.

### Sex Differences in Rape Myth Acceptance

The empirical study of rape myths has consistently found that men have higher levels of RMA than women (e.g., Anderson, Cooper, & Okamura, 1997; Rosenstein, 2015; Suarez &

Gadalla, 2010). However, although this overall difference between men and women is well established, less attention has been given to whether there are differences among the specific rape myths women and men endorse. At a theoretical level, there is reason to believe that women and men may endorse different myths and at differing levels. Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994, 1995) argued that for men, acceptance of rape myths serves to provide excuses for sexual violence, to diminish the male perpetrator’s responsibility, and to deny that they are the “type” of man who would commit rape. In contrast, for many women, rape myths provide a sense of security, albeit false, that if they do not behave, act, or dress in a certain way, they will not be victimized. Few empirical studies, however, have closely examined the gendered patterns of RMA at the level of specific myths, with the few studies that have addressed this issue, finding gender differences consistent with the theorized differing functions of rape myths (e.g., Johnson, Kuck, & Schander, 1997; McMahan, 2007).

### Military Service Academy and Fraternity Men

Military service academies and fraternities share characteristics theorized to be supportive of aggression toward women (Martin & Hummer, 1989; Nelson, 2002). Both are associated with promoting hypermasculinity—expressions of extreme, exaggerated, or stereotypic masculine attributes and behaviors (Mosher & Tomkins, 1988)—which has been found to be a strong predictor of sexual aggression (Murnen, Wright, & Kaluzny, 2002). Both the military and many fraternities place a high value on “masculine” qualities such as power, toughness, dominance, and aggression, while devaluing feminine or female-associated qualities and behaviors (Martin & Hummer, 1989; Turchik & Wilson, 2010). Previous research has consistently found fraternity membership to be positively related to rape-supportive attitudes. Specifically, fraternity membership has been associated with more traditional attitudes toward women and gender roles (Murnen & Kohlman, 2007), a stronger belief in male dominance and hypermasculinity (Kalof & Cargill, 1991; Murnen & Kohlman, 2007), and higher levels of RMA

(Bleecker & Murnen, 2005; Murnen & Kohlman, 2007). In comparison, attitudes of military service academy men have been less well studied, although the patterns appear similar to those of fraternity men. For example, previous research indicates that men who decide to attend a military service academy are more conservative, hold more traditional sex role attitudes, are more ambivalent in their attitudes toward women, and are more supportive of the military being a masculine culture than their civilian counterparts (Drake, 2006; Kurpius & Lucart, 2000; Matthews, Ender, Laurence, & Rohall, 2009). Specific to beliefs regarding sexual assault, findings suggest similarities between military service academy men and their civilian peers regarding interpreting sexual assault scenarios; however, military service academy men attributed more blame to female victims for their behavior (Carroll & Clark, 2006). This is consistent with Foubert and Masin's (2012) findings that enlisted Army men were more supportive of myths blaming victims (e.g., "She asked for it"). Given the emphasis on hypermasculinity that characterizes both organizations, we expected that men entering military service academies and fraternities would have similar levels of RMA and that the most endorsed rape myths would be those that blame the victim and provide explanations for a male perpetrator's behavior.

### Military Service Academy and Sorority Women

Compared to men, the rape-supportive attitudes of women within the military and sororities have received considerably less attention, although more is known about the impact of sorority membership than women's military membership. Sorority membership has been linked to higher risk for sexual victimization (Mohler-Kuo, Dowdall, Koss, & Wechsler, 2004); partly explained by sorority members' more frequent interaction with fraternity men in social situations in which alcohol use is prevalent (Franklin, 2008). In addition, although sororities often have the goal of advancing women, many of their traditions and activities center around "finding a man" (Berkowitz & Padavic, 1999), and have norms permeated by "notions of femininity,

beauty, and relational dependence on men" (Franklin, 2008, p. 109). Consistent with this, sorority women are more likely to demonstrate stronger adherence to traditional gender roles, male dominance, and adversarial sexual beliefs, and are more accepting of interpersonal violence and rape myths than nonsorority women (Anderson et al., 1997; Kalof, 1993). In comparison to fraternity men, however, sorority women have been found to be more rejecting of rape myths and more likely to intervene to prevent sexual assault (Bannon, Brosi, & Foubert, 2013).

Unlike sorority women who are sex segregated, military service academy women are immersed in the same environment as military service academy men—one that values (hyper) masculinity and devalues femininity as both the antithesis of masculinity and the epitome of weakness. Scholars on women in the military observe how military women face a "double bind" as they must demonstrate the traditionally masculine qualities valued by the institution (e.g., physical strength, self-control, stoicism) while balancing the cultural definitions of femininity that have contributed to their personal identities (Furia, 2010; Silva, 2008). In addition to operating in an organization in which "maleness" is afforded a higher status, military women also remain a numerical minority.

While the military service academy women in this study were just entering the academies, and thus most had yet to directly encounter these challenges, these women chose to join an organization that is male-dominated and where physical manifestations of femininity are minimized (e.g., short hair or hair tightly pinned, minimal makeup and jewelry, masculine uniforms). However, the impact of this self-selection into a traditionally masculine environment on women's attitudes toward sexual assault has received virtually no empirical study. It was hypothesized that these women may be less similar to their sorority peers and more aligned in their underlying attitudes to their military male counterparts, and thus have higher levels of RMA than sorority women. Specifically, we expected that women entering the military service academies would be more likely to endorse myths that blame the victim and provide explanations for the male perpetrator's behavior than women entering sororities.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

Convenience samples were collected from three institutions: two U.S. military service academies (U.S. Military Academy [USMA] and U.S. Naval Academy [USNA]) and a large public university in the Midwest. Research instruments and protocols were submitted and approved by the institutional review boards at each institution. At the two military service academies, entering students were surveyed during the summer training (akin to basic training) that precedes their first year at the academies. At both institutions, the initial weeks of summer training consist of a number of meetings orienting students to the academies and socializing them into the military, including an overview of the sexual assault prevention and response programs. As part of this overview, all new students were asked to complete a variety of surveys, including the measure reported in this paper. Survey administrators provided an introduction to the survey and stressed that participation was voluntary and anonymous (USMA) or confidential (USNA). Surveys were administered via paper and pencil (USMA and USNA) or computer (USNA<sup>1</sup>). The USMA sample included 1,169 participants (1,003 men, 166 women) and represented one incoming class (response rate of approximately 90%); they ranged in age from 17 to 23 years old ( $M = 18.71$ ,  $SD = .95$ ). The USNA sample included 1,916 participants (1,551 men, 365 women) and represented two incoming classes (average response rate of 90%)<sup>2</sup>; they ranged in age from 18–23 years ( $M = 18.67$ ,  $SD = .84$ ). Reflective of the demographics of their institutions, the majority of both samples were White (USMA, 76.6%; USNA, 67.7%); the other ethnicities represented were Hispanic (USMA, 5.9%; USNA, 12.1%), Asian (USMA, 5.0%, USNA, 6.5%), African American (USMA, 5.0%; USNA, 7.8%), and other (USMA, 4.3%; USNA, 5.6%).

The participants from the Midwestern public university were recruited as part of a larger anonymous study examining the impact of pornography viewing on attitudes and behaviors related to sexual assault among fraternity and sorority members (Bannon et al., 2013). Graduate students visited each fraternity or sorority

house who had volunteered to take part in this study up to three times to distribute and collect paper surveys. Data collection was conducted during regularly scheduled meeting times, during which the purpose of the study was explained and volunteers were requested. The response rate for participation was 62% of fraternity men and 34% of sorority women. For the current study, only the responses of participants who identified themselves as either freshman or sophomores were included (393 participants, 188 men, 205 women); they ranged in age from 18–23 years ( $M = 18.71$ ,  $SD = .95$ ). Given the nature of the racial population that joins historically white fraternities and sororities, the fraternity/sorority sample was less diverse than the military academy samples: White (90.3%), Hispanic (2.3%), Asian (0.8%), African American (0.5%), and other (6.1%).

### Measures

Participants completed the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale–Short Form (IRMA-SF; Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999). The IRMA-SF includes 17 questions designed to assess seven underlying rape myth constructs (i.e., “She asked for it,” “It was not really rape,” “He didn’t mean to,” “She wanted it,” “She lied,” “Rape is a trivial event,” and “Rape is deviant”). The military service academy samples responded on a 6-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*); the fraternity and sorority samples responded on a 7-point scale where 1 represented disagreement and 7 represented agreement.<sup>3</sup> Higher scores indicated greater RMA. The al-

<sup>1</sup> Two cohorts at USNA received the survey. The first cohort completed the survey using paper and pencil, the second via computer.

<sup>2</sup> The high response rate for the academy students is attributed to the setting for data collection. Although the voluntary aspect of participation was stressed, because of the rigid structure of the summer schedule, all students were required to remain for the entirety of the time set aside for the completion of the surveys. This likely encouraged the students to complete the surveys rather than sitting and doing nothing. It is worth noting that these rates of participation are consistent with other research on samples of military recruits (e.g., Rau et al., 2010, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Hypotheses were developed before collection of the military data, but data from the fraternity and sorority sample, which was collected independently as part of a different study, was added at a later date to provide a civilian comparison.

pha reliability for the measure was .84 for the USMA sample, .83 for the USNA sample, and .90 for the fraternity and sorority sample.

## Results

### Analytic Plan

To examine the extent of rape myth endorsement, we calculated the percentage of respondents who either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with each item (i.e., for the military service academy samples, responded with either a 5 or 6 for the item; for the fraternity/sorority sample, responded with either a 5, 6, or 7). This allowed us to examine the pattern of RMA across the samples and to examine whether there were differences in the pattern of the myths accepted by women and men.

Due to the different scales used, to compare level of acceptance across samples, the scores for each item were transformed to standard  $z$  scores (Colman, Norris, & Preston, 1997). A multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to examine whether RMA was impacted by both gender and institution. The results of the multivariate analysis of variance revealed a significant effect for gender,  $F(17, 3,293) = 16.65, p < .001$ ; institution,  $F(34, 6,588) = 8.65, p < .001$ ; and an interaction between gender and institution,  $F(34, 6,588) = 2.39, p < .001$ . Follow-up analyses were conducted to examine overall gender differences for each item and to compare level of acceptance across the different samples by gender. Given the large number of comparisons made, a Bonferroni correction was used to control for family wise error (i.e.,  $\alpha = .05/17, p < .003$ ).

### Comparison of Women and Men

The majority of both women and men reported a general disagreement with the rape myth statements. As seen in Table 1, there were no items for which the percentage of those who agreed with the item exceeded the percentage of those who disagreed with the item. In fact, no item received greater than 36% agreement.

Consistent with our expectation, men collectively displayed higher levels of RMA than women. As seen in Table 2, men’s level of acceptance was higher for all myths, with the exception of the item related to a woman being

somewhat responsible if she is drunk, where there was no gender difference. In addition, as indicated in Table 1, there were seven myths with which 10% or more men agreed, versus six such myths for women. Finally, there was a significant gender difference in the total number of myths that each individual endorsed. Specifically, although the majority of both women and men were most likely to endorse one to three myths (54.2% and 53.2%, respectively),  $\chi^2(1, N = 3,478) = .25, p = .25$ , Cramer’s  $V = .01$ , women were more likely than men to reject all of the myths (31.7% and 22.1%, respectively),  $\chi^2(1, N = 3,478) = 28.95, p < .001$ , Cramer’s  $V = .09$ , whereas men were more likely than women to endorse four or more myths (24.7% and 14.1%, respectively),  $\chi^2(1, N = 3,478) = 37.38, p < .001$ , Cramer’s  $V = .10$ .

Although men and women differed in their level of RMA, there was considerable similarity in the relative ordering of the rape myths endorsed, which was inconsistent with our expectation. A comparison of the relative ordering of the myths for men and women reveals a similar pattern of RMA (i.e., the same top six, middle five, bottom six), with only slight variations in the ordinal positions of the myths (see Table 1). Specifically, myths supporting ideas that women’s behavior contributes to the assault (e.g., drinking too much, wearing too little, the way she says “no”), minimize male culpability, and argue that women lie about sexual assault had the highest levels of support by both men and women. Conversely, myths minimizing the impact of rape and contradicting the “facts” of rape (e.g., “nice” men do not rape, rape is unlikely in a woman’s familiar neighborhood, rape involves the use of a weapon) received low levels of support from both men and women.

### Sex by Sample Comparisons

When comparing men and women across the different samples, institution was found to affect level of acceptance among both the male,  $F(34, 5,162) = 14.02, p < .001$ , and female samples,  $F(34, 1,396) = 3.70, p < .001$ . However, contrary to our expectations, follow-up analyses revealed a greater degree of difference in the levels of RMA among men than among women (see Table 2). Specifically, among the men, there were significant differences across

Table 1  
Percent of Respondents by Sample Who Endorsed Each Rape Myth

| Item  | Overall |       | USMA |       | USNA |       | Fraternity | Sorority |
|---|---------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------------|----------|
|   | Men     | Women | Men  | Women | Men  | Women | Men        | Women    |
| If a woman is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of control. | 36.0    | 32.3  | 41.1 | 43.6  | 34.2 | 32.7  | 24.5       | 22.4     |
| Rape happens when a man's sex drive gets out of control.  | 33.1    | 23.2  | 35.4 | 26.1  | 31.1 | 22.5  | 37.4       | 22.2     |
| Men don't usually intend to force sex on a woman, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away.                 | 31.8    | 18.6  | 32.5 | 17.2  | 31.6 | 22.5  | 30.3       | 12.8     |
| Rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at men.  | 24.4    | 14.1  | 15.9 | 9.6   | 29.6 | 18.8  | 27.7       | 9.3      |
| A woman who dresses in skimpy clothes should not be surprised if a man tries to force her to have sex.              | 22.2    | 17.8  | 19.5 | 16.0  | 22.7 | 21.6  | 31.9       | 12.3     |
| A lot of women lead a man on and then they cry rape.  | 17.9    | 12.7  | 13.6 | 9.6   | 19.9 | 14.5  | 23.9       | 11.8     |
| When women are raped, it's often because the way they said "no" was ambiguous.                                      | 14.2    | 8.6   | 15.4 | 11.8  | 13.7 | 9.3   | 12.8       | 4.5      |
| It is usually only women who dress suggestively that are raped.   | 9.2     | 4.9   | 8.9  | 8.4   | 8.9  | 4.4   | 13.3       | 2.9      |
| Although most women wouldn't admit it, they generally find being physically forced into sex a real "turn on."       | 9.1     | 8.9   | 4.0  | 8.5   | 13.0 | 12.4  | 4.8        | 2.9      |
| If a woman doesn't physically fight back, you can't really say that it was rape.                                    | 7.4     | 5.7   | 5.2  | 5.4   | 8.2  | 5.8   | 12.2       | 5.9      |
| Women tend to exaggerate how much rape affects them.  | 5.2     | 3.9   | 3.1  | 3.6   | 5.9  | 1.9   | 11.2       | 7.8      |
| A woman who "teases" men deserves anything that might happen.   | 5.0     | 2.7   | 3.1  | 1.2   | 5.7  | 4.4   | 9.6        | 1.0      |
| Men from nice middle-class homes almost never rape.   | 4.3     | 2.7   | 3.1  | 2.4   | 4.2  | 1.7   | 10.6       | 4.9      |
| Rape is unlikely to happen in the woman's own familiar neighborhood.  | 4.0     | 2.2   | 3.1  | 4.2   | 3.9  | 2.2   | 10.1       | .5       |
| 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.      | 3.4     | 2.2   | 2.0  | 1.8   | 3.8  | 2.2   | 7.4        | 2.4      |
| Many women secretly desire to be raped.   | 2.0     | 2.6   | 1.6  | 4.2   | 1.8  | 2.5   | 5.9        | 1.5      |
| If the rapist doesn't have a weapon, you really can't call it rape.   | .7      | .4    | .5   | .0    | .6   | .3    | 2.1        | 1.0      |

Note. USMA = U.S. Military Academy; USNA = U.S. Naval Academy.

the samples for 15 myths, whereas there were only five items on which the women differed.

Looking at the men, the overall pattern was that USMA men had lower levels of acceptance than either the USNA or fraternity men, who did not differ from each other. This pattern was evident for 12 of the items (see Table 2). The one item for which USMA men had a higher level of acceptance than the other samples was the belief that a woman is responsible if she has been drinking. Finally, fraternity men had a higher level of acceptance for the ideas that men

do not usually intend to force sex, but sometimes get carried away and that a woman's attire is relevant. There was no difference among the samples of men for the idea that rape happens when women are unclear in how they say no and because of a loss of control of the male sex drive.

This overall pattern of difference was also noted in the number of myths endorsed by each sample of men. Although there were no differences among the samples in the percentages of men who endorsed three or fewer myths, the

Table 2  
*Mean Standard z Scores for Each Rape Myth by Sample*

| Item  | <i>M</i>   |             |                          |                         |                        |                         |                        |                           |
|---|------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
|   | Overall    |             | USMA                     |                         | USNA                   |                         | Fraternity             | Sorority                  |
|   | Men        | Women       | Men                      | Women                   | Men                    | Women                   | Men                    | Women                     |
| If a woman is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of control. | .01        | -.03        | .11 <sup>a</sup>         | .21 <sup>y</sup>        | -.06 <sup>b</sup>      | -.18 <sup>z</sup>       | .07 <sup>a,b</sup>     | .04 <sup>y,z</sup>        |
| Although most women wouldn't admit it, they generally find being physically forced into sex a real "turn on."       | <b>.03</b> | <b>-.13</b> | -.26 <sup>a</sup>        | -.27                    | <b>.19<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.01</b>             | <b>.29<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.22</b>               |
| 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.      | <b>.08</b> | <b>-.32</b> | <b>-.23<sup>a</sup></b>  | <b>-.52<sup>y</sup></b> | <b>.25<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.24<sup>z</sup></b> | <b>.31<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.32<sup>y,z</sup></b> |
| Many women secretly desire to be raped.   | <b>.04</b> | <b>-.14</b> | -.18 <sup>a</sup>        | -.17                    | <b>.14<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.07</b>             | <b>.27<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.20</b>               |
| If a woman doesn't fight back, you can't really say that it was rape.   | <b>.04</b> | <b>-.16</b> | -.17 <sup>a</sup>        | -.32                    | <b>.15<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.09</b>             | <b>.25<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.15</b>               |
| Men from nice middle-class homes almost never rape.   | <b>.06</b> | <b>-.22</b> | <b>-.13<sup>a</sup></b>  | <b>-.44<sup>y</sup></b> | <b>.15<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.16<sup>y</sup></b> | <b>.25<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.14<sup>y</sup></b>   |
| Rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at men.  | <b>.08</b> | <b>-.33</b> | <b>-.14<sup>a</sup></b>  | <b>-.63<sup>y</sup></b> | <b>.20<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.22<sup>z</sup></b> | <b>.28<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.31<sup>y,z</sup></b> |
| It is usually only women who dress suggestively that are raped.   | <b>.06</b> | <b>-.25</b> | <b>-.05<sup>a</sup></b>  | <b>-.39</b>             | <b>.11<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.20</b>             | <b>.26<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.22</b>               |
| If a rapist doesn't have a weapon, you really can't call it rape.   | <b>.03</b> | <b>-.16</b> | -.22 <sup>a</sup>        | -.29                    | <b>.17<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.10</b>             | <b>.20<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.14</b>               |
| Rape is unlikely to happen in the woman's own familiar neighborhood.  | <b>.06</b> | <b>-.21</b> | .24 <sup>a</sup>         | -.36                    | <b>.20<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.10</b>             | <b>.39<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.28</b>               |
| Women tend to exaggerate how much rape affects them.  | <b>.05</b> | <b>-.19</b> | -.20 <sup>a</sup>        | -.33                    | <b>.18<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.13</b>             | <b>.29<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.18</b>               |
| A lot of women lead a man on and then they cry rape.  | <b>.05</b> | <b>-.18</b> | <b>-.13<sup>a</sup></b>  | <b>-.43<sup>a</sup></b> | <b>.15<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.13<sup>a</sup></b> | .18 <sup>b</sup>       | -.08 <sup>a</sup>         |
| A woman who "teases" men deserved anything that might happen.   | <b>.06</b> | <b>-.23</b> | <b>-.16<sup>a</sup></b>  | <b>-.41</b>             | <b>.16<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.13</b>             | <b>.31<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.25</b>               |
| When women are raped, it is often because the way they said "no" was ambiguous.                                     | <b>.05</b> | <b>-.19</b> | .03                      | -.11                    | <b>.04</b>             | <b>-.22</b>             | <b>.27</b>             | <b>-.18</b>               |
| Men don't usually intend to force sex on a woman, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away.                 | <b>.08</b> | <b>-.28</b> | <b>.11<sup>a,b</sup></b> | <b>-.38</b>             | <b>.03<sup>a</sup></b> | <b>-.29</b>             | <b>.29<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.21</b>               |
| A woman who dresses in skimpy clothes should not be surprised if a man tries to force her to have sex.              | <b>.04</b> | <b>-.13</b> | -.04 <sup>a</sup>        | -.27                    | .05 <sup>a</sup>       | -.02                    | <b>.37<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>-.20</b>               |
| Rape happens when a man's sex drive gets out of control.  | <b>.04</b> | <b>-.11</b> | .04                      | -.06                    | <b>.02</b>             | <b>-.17</b>             | <b>.26</b>             | <b>-.06</b>               |

*Note.* USMA = U.S. Military Academy; USNA = U.S. Naval Academy. Bolded values reflect significant gender differences within an institution ( $p < .003$ ). Superscripts indicate significant gender differences across institutions ( $p < .003$ ).

men differed in the likelihood of accepting four or more myths,  $\chi^2(1, N = 2,742) = 23.23, p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .09$ . Specifically, approximately 32% of fraternity men and 27% of USNA men accepted four or more myths as compared to approximately 20% of men from USMA.

Contrary to predictions, there was overall similarity among the samples of women. Al-

though upon initial inspection there appeared to be differences for five items, post hoc analyses revealed significant differences for only three items. As seen in Table 2, the primary difference was between the military academy women. Specifically, USMA women were most likely to endorse the myth holding a woman responsible if she has been drinking, while USNA women were more likely to endorse myths that rape

accusations are used as a way of getting back at men and that if a woman begins sexual activity, it is no “big deal” if the sexual activity goes further.

Finally, the prediction of greater degree of similarity between the military service academy men and women was partially supported. Specifically, whereas the analyses indicated a significant effect for sex among each sample, USMA,  $F(17, 1,074) = 5.58, p < .001$ ; USNA,  $F(17, 1815) = 8.88, p < .001$ ; fraternity/sorority,  $F(17, 372) = 7.26, p < .001$ , follow-up analysis indicated that whereas USNA and fraternity and sorority men and women differed in their level of acceptance of 15 of the 17 myths, USMA men and women differed on only 7 of the 17 items (see Table 2).

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the pattern of RMA among entering military service academy and fraternity/sorority men and women. Consistent with previous research examining the pattern of RMA among college students (e.g., McMahan, 2007, 2010), while there were a number of rape myths that received low levels of acceptance, there were others that remained more pervasive. Specifically, respondents were more likely to endorse myths that tend to deny male perpetrator culpability, support ideas that by drinking and wearing “skimpy” clothes women are at least partially responsible for being assaulted, and promote the belief that women lie about being raped. This is consistent with McMahan’s (2007, 2010) work observing that while rape myths that blatantly blame girls and women for rape have become less acceptable, beliefs that girls/women did something that contributed to the assault (e.g., dressed a certain way, drank, etc.) and that excused the perpetrator’s behavior continue to persist.

As anticipated, men displayed higher levels of RMA than women. Given the consistency of this finding in previous studies (e.g., Bannon et al., 2013; McMahan, 2010), it would have been surprising if the overall gender difference had not been replicated. However, contrary to our expectation that there would be a gender difference in the pattern of RMA, there was similarity in the relative myth ordering by women and men. Consistent with findings of a considerable

overlap in the types of themes associated with the concept of rape by women and men (Carroll & Clark, 2006; Clark & Carroll, 2008), the relative consistency in the types of myths endorsed may be reflective of broad social patterns that continue to influence the belief systems of women and men. Further, the fact that students at these institutions are drawn from across the country and have different backgrounds (e.g., rural/urban) may further support the idea of a relatively consistent national narrative about rape, although this conclusion would benefit from further analyses with a wider sample.

Our examination of institutional variation of RMA revealed greater differences among men than among women. Whereas there were significant differences among the military service academy and fraternity men for 12 of the 17 myths, the military service academy and sorority women only differed on three items. The relative uniformity among women may be due to the heightened awareness women have about sexual assault. As Gordon and Riger (1989) noted, “fear of rape” is part of women’s everyday experiences; it is something women talk about and are warned about from the time they were young. In contrast, because male victimization receives much less attention, sexual assault is likely not part of men’s daily consciousness. This is beginning to change as attention to male victimization is growing, particularly in the military where, in absolute numbers, male victims outnumber female victims (Department of Defense, 2015). Similarly, there is increasing research into male RMA (myths involving male victims), generally, and among military populations, specifically (e.g., Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2008; Davies, Gilston, & Rogers, 2012; Rosenstein, 2015; Rosenstein & Carroll, 2015). However, despite this increased empirical focus, culturally sexual assault continues to be seen as a female issue (Stemple, 2009).

Although it was expected that the military men and women would be more aligned in their beliefs than the fraternity and sorority men and women, this expectation was related to the expectation that military academy women would have higher levels of RMA than sorority women. What was unexpected was that the greater alignment between USMA men and women appears to be most associated with the relatively lower level of RMA by USMA men in comparison to the men at the other institutions. While

there has been little research done examining the types of students attracted to the different military service academies, it is interesting to note that USNA men's higher RMA is consistent with Kurpius and Lucart's (2000) finding that USNA students were the most traditional in their gender role beliefs when compared to civilian undergraduates, ROTC, and United States Air Force Academy cadets. Further research is necessary to determine whether the differences observed among the men reflect an actual difference in the preenrollment characteristics at these institutions or is an artifact of institutional culture even at this early stage of socialization.

### Implications and Limitations

The diversity in the men's beliefs regarding rape myths provides a potential challenge to sexual assault prevention efforts. Although the overall pattern consistency offers prevention programs a sense of what issues are relevant to these select groups of men, the diversity in beliefs indicates that the needs of students varies by organization and potentially by internal affiliations as well (e.g., athletic teams, specific fraternity, etc.). This finding is consistent with research on "best practices" in sexual assault prevention (for review, see Vladutiu, Martin, & Macy, 2011) to develop programs based on the type of audience. As such, prevention efforts need to go hand in hand with assessment, so as to determine the needs of each community.

Although there was diversity among the men in this analysis, beliefs related to victim blaming, denial of perpetrator responsibility, and consent remained relevant. If these results are generalizable then they pose a challenge to prevention programs as these beliefs are inherently difficult to combat and change as they are grounded in deeply held and frequently perpetuated cultural beliefs (Edwards et al., 2011). Consequently, there is a level of cultural change that must occur before these myths will be eradicated. Given that the respondents, particularly those from the military service academies, were fairly new to college, the continued acceptance of rape myths among these students points to the need for sexual assault prevention aimed at younger age groups. By the time students reach college, their rape myth beliefs appear to be well established.

While this study focused on a subset of military college students, the findings may be relevant to the broader military. Military service academy students represent the future officer corps; thus, it is important to understand the attitudes they bring into this role. Moreover, because most military recruits are the same age as respondents in this study, the findings from the current study may be informative for the sexual assault prevention programs often incorporated into basic training. For example, the overall difference in men and women's level of RMA provides support for a sex-segregated approach to sexual assault prevention programs (Vladutiu et al., 2011); an approach reflected in programs such as the Men's Program with Army personnel (Foubert & Masin, 2012) and the program for Navy personnel evaluated by Rau et al. (2010, 2011). Future work is needed to explore the similarities and differences within military subgroups.

The current study had several limitations. Although all participants were new to their organizations, the fraternity and sorority samples were assessed after the pledging process, whereas the military service academy samples were assessed early in their basic training. As such, it cannot be determined what impact these early socialization experiences may have had on the attitudes these students had upon entering these organizations. In addition, there were differences in the response rate, with the military service academy samples having a higher response rate than the fraternity and sorority samples. This difference was especially noteworthy for the women as the response rate among the sorority women was the lowest. Thus, it cannot be ruled out that the responses of the sorority women who elected not to participate in this study may be different than those who participated. Finally, both scaling and implementation differences for the IRMA may have contributed to the pattern of differences observed in this study. Future studies are recommended to address these issues and widen the consideration of the impact of organizational affiliation on the underlying attitudes of men and women. For example, to further examine the impact of socialization within these organizations, future studies should examine the level of RMA among more senior members of these organizations. In addition, a comparison sample of college and noncollege students could be included.

Ultimately, we believe this study helps demonstrate that differences in RMA go beyond the frequently cited sex difference. Indeed, men believe more myths than women. At the same time, strong cultural influences can impact a population such that the gap between men's and women's RMA may be mitigated by organizational norms that press toward masculinity. Understanding the cultural characteristics of organizations and institutions that may foster different rape myths for men and women can help us come closer to identifying targeted educational efforts to address false beliefs about rape.

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